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UNITED STATES NAVY

WAR DIARY
OF
ADMIRAL, BLACK SEA



1 DECEMBER, 1943 - 31 DECEMBER, 1943
PG NUMBERS 31544 - 31545

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Editorial Note:

The translation of this German War Diary was made in London, England, under the guidance of Commander G. R. Sanders, USNR. When his London office was closed and the translation project was discontinued, much unfinished material was sent to Naval History Division, (CP-29).

Because the dissemination of the data contained in these documents is important, the translations and stencils have not been checked for accuracy of interpretation, phraseology, and spelling of officers' names or geographical names. Distribution under these conditions seems justified because of the excellent reputation of the London personnel and because translators are not available in Naval History Division. Research to correct possible inconsistencies did not warrant the time involved.

DEPARTMENT OF THE NAVY
Office of the Chief of Naval Operations
Naval History Division
Washington 25, D. C.

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1 December, 1943

Simferopol

Enemy Situation:

Nothing was detected by night reconnaissance over the northeastern Black Sea.

At 1305 approximately 7 miles northeast of Ayanzik, daylight reconnaissance over the central Black Sea sighted a coastal steamer of 1,000 tons, course east.

At 1425, according to a radio intercept report, Ghelenjik air station transmitted a message to an enemy reconnaissance plane, reporting 3 vessels, course 270°, speed 15 knots, in an unidentified grid square. This report referred to the 3 E-boats which left Balaklava at 1300 for Constantza.

Main Naval D/F Station Reports:

Two E-boats were intercepted between the northern and central parts of the east coast in the evening. Only slight activity of small vessels at night.

Submarines detected: 3 in the northwestern Black Sea to west and southwest of the Crimea, one of which was presumably homeward bound. Four more submarines are thought to be in the operational area. One further submarine is at sea, position unknown.

According to this, 8 submarines are operating, that is, three less than yesterday.

Own Situation:

Weather forecast:

S winds, force 4 - 5, cloudy, visibility 10 miles, sea 3.

Crimea and Kerch Strait:

- a. The patrol line off Kamish Burun and Eltigen reported no special incidents. No supply traffic was seen. The beachhead was again shelled at daybreak with 60 rounds from 7.5 cm. guns.

Naval ferry barges F 574 and F 341, which ran aground near Kossa Tuszla, were completely destroyed by our guns on the night of 30 November/1 December. A heavy air raid

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was launched against Kamish Burun at 0545, in which a direct hit was scored on F 573. The boat is a total loss. F 559 was damaged by splinters and is shipping water. There were no casualties.

In further attacks on Kamish Burun, another hit was scored on F 472 and her engines are under water. F 348 probably has an unexploded bomb in the double bottom. F 573 sank after a second hit. One man seriously wounded.

- b. Group South was informed that it would be impossible to keep the blockading patrols off the Eltigen beachhead up to their previous strength on account of the serious losses in naval ferry barges in the Kerch operations. Of the 10 naval ferry barges operational on 27 November, only 2 are still operational today.

At a conference today this was pointed out to Commanding General, 17th Army H.Q. and I again stressed the urgent necessity of mopping up the Eltigen beachhead. Commanding General agreed and stated that an attack was planned for 4 December.

c. Land Situation:

On the northern front, enemy harassing fire in the Arabatz, Chongar, Karanki, Tarkhan and Armiansk sectors.

The enemy continued work on the dam on either side of Russki island. The southern part has been completed, the northern part except for 80 meters.

Two thrusts by enemy patrols were repulsed at the Baksy bridgehead near Hill 133.3.

Operations ordered for the night of 1/2 December:

1. Commander, 1st Landing Craft Flotilla received orders to occupy the patrol lines off Kerch and Kamish Burun with 2 naval ferry barges off each port.
2. Five boats of 3rd Motor Minesweeper Flotilla will occupy the patrol line between Chongelek and Kamish Burun, concentrating off Eltigen.

The boats mentioned in paras. 1. and 2. are to be in position at dusk and should leave again at dawn.

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Before commencing return passage, the motor minesweepers are to shell the Eltigen beachhead. 50 rounds to be fired at intervals by each boat. 1st Air Corps has been requested to provide fighter cover for the motor minesweepers on both outward and homeward passage.

The patrol lines were occupied from dusk onwards except for the one in Kerch Bay, which could not be occupied after further naval ferry barges were damaged in the air raid on Kamish Burun. At the moment only 2 naval ferry barges are still operational.

Western Black Sea:

It was pointed out to Commander, Convoys and Escorts, Black Sea that the serious losses in tugs caused by rough seas and the consequent decline in transport potential would in future make it necessary to take weather conditions into consideration when dispatching towed convoys. On the other hand, in order to ensure seaborne supplies to the Crimea, the vessels must operate as often as possible. The possibility of executing the operation will be decided in each case by Commander, Convoys and Escorts, Black Sea as the responsible authority. Army Group A and 17th Army H.Q. have been informed.

1st Air Corps was requested to repeat the recent attack on the air base at Skadovsk. The object is to damage the enemy air bases in the Skadovsk area as much as possible as they are used by bombers and torpedo planes operating against our convoys in the northwestern Black Sea.

At 1530 256 bombs, type SD 50, were dropped on the air base. Three large fires were observed and, as the planes turned away, 1 large and several smaller explosions were observed.

As no mines were found by motor minesweepers (RA), FZ-boats and minesweeping planes in Eupatoria Bay where "Santa Fe" exploded, it is now thought even more probable that she sank as a result of an internal explosion. Sabotage is possible. Sea Transportation Offices have received orders to keep a sharp look-out when loading ships.

Anti-submarine patrol had to be canceled in Eupatoria Bay because of the weather. Three E-boats left Balaklava at 1300 for Constantza to undergo repairs. Four naval ferry barges, withdrawn from the Kerch operations, left Theodosia at 1600 for Sevastopol for a period in dock.

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South Coast Crimea:

Commander, Convoys and Escorts, Crimean Coast received orders to transfer naval ferry barges F 578, F 342 and F 305 from Sevastopol to Yalta in the evening. F 342 and F 305 are to be unloaded as quickly as possible after arrival in Yalta, so that the 3 boats can be dispatched to Theodosia on the evening of 2 December for operations in Kerch Strait. The boats will leave Sevastopol at 2100.

U-boat Situation:

U 9 and U 20, on southeasterly patrol off the Caucasus coast, were detailed to new attack areas off Poti. U 19 reported that she would be off Constantza at 0600 on 2 December. Escort and radio beacon have been ordered. Naval Fitting-out and Repair Depot, Galatz examined the damage caused by depth charges aboard U 18 and reported that, in addition to serious damage to the batteries, the propeller shafts are hammering and the Diesel engine foundations are loose. The shafts and engines will probably have to be refitted. It is unlikely that the boat will be operational again before the end of January 1944. The repairs will be undertaken systematically so that, by caulking the pressure hulls provisionally, she can, if necessary, be towed to Constantza before the Danube freezes over.

On the basis of a report from a German interpreter, German Naval Command informed me that there is a danger that the personnel of the Italian Submarine Flotilla in Constantza may desert. German Naval Command requested directives regarding action to be taken if an investigation should confirm this suspicion. Before Admiral, Black Sea received this request from German Naval Command, Group South had ordered that, without mentioning the suspected intentions of the Italians to desert, the Rumanians should be informed that Germany might take over the Italian submarines. Possible unreliability of the Italians would be counteracted, if the need arose, by placing German guards on the boats and berthing places. Admiral, Black Sea has requested C-in-C Italian Fleet and the Fleet Engineer to attend a conference at Simferopol, and intends to transfer the entire flotilla to Linz inside the German sphere of influence. Group South and German Naval Command have been informed.

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Enemy Air Activity:

At 1110, in spite of thick fog, enemy planes launched an attack in 2 waves against 1st Battery, Naval Gunnery Detachment 903 and the oil harbor at Ochakov. There were no losses. A few barges were damaged by blast.

Minesweeping Activity:

Two motor minesweepers (RA) made a check sweep in Eupatoria harbor entrance with oropesa gear, type 4, covering a width of 800 meters. No mines were swept. A minesweeping plane swept the area south of route Green 40/41 in strips 400 meters wide. The area was checked twice. No mines were swept.

Supply Traffic:

There was little convoy traffic in the western Black Sea because of the weather. Nothing to report.

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2 December, 1943

Simferopol

Enemy Situation:

No enemy shipping was sighted by night reconnaissance over the Crimean and Caucasus coasts as far as Cape Pitsunda.

The central Black Sea was checked during the day. At 0700 a Turkish freighter of 5,000 tons on westerly course was sighted approximately 16 miles north of Ayanzik. A radio intercept report confirmed that the destroyer recently intercepted in a base in the northwestern Black Sea had left port heading in a southeasterly direction. The position of an unidentified vessel operating approximately 14 miles west-northwest of Poti was transmitted to her.

Main Naval D/F Station Reports:

The destroyer which left base was intercepted between the northern and the central parts of the east coast, course southeast. A minesweeper was intercepted off the southern part of the east coast.

Radio intelligence detected no activity of surface forces in the east coast area or in the Sea of Azov.

Submarines detected: 5 in the northwestern Black Sea to west and southwest of the Crimea, one of which was approaching from a southeasterly direction. There were probably 3 further submarines in the operational area, one of which was homeward bound. Two more boats were detected at sea, position unknown. According to this, 9 submarines were operating.

Own Situation:

Weather forecast:

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seen in the period of good visibility. Lively enemy air activity with bombing raids on our patrol forces. Ground attack planes attacked our motor minesweepers several times while they were returning to Theodosia. Our fighter escort brought down 9 enemy planes.

- b. Naval Gunnery Detachment 613 reported continuous ferry traffic observed during the day under cover of smoke screens.

During the day, ground attack planes with strong fighter escort carried out continuous heavy attacks on the southern beachhead, bombing and machine-gunning our positions and the rear area. 104 supply canisters were dropped over Eltigen.

Kamish Burun was bombed and machine-gunned several times during the day and evening.

- c. Land Situation:

Morning: At 1800, after heavy preparatory shelling on the northern front, the enemy began to attack the western sector of the Perokop front. The attacks were repulsed with the exception of one breakthrough in a sector 400 meters by 250 meters. The point of penetration was narrowed down in counter-attacks. Fighting continues.

All was quiet at the beachheads. Air supplies still arriving at Eltigen. A new Russian division has appeared at the Baksy beachhead.

Evening: The enemy breakthrough on the Perokop front was reduced still further; fighting continues. An enemy attack on Hill 17.6 was repulsed. Lively enemy fire against the main defense line at the Baksy beachhead. Ground attack planes attacked the main defense line at Eltigen and Kamish Burun continuously.

Operations ordered for the night of 2/3 December:

Patrol lines will be as follows:

- a. Commander, 1st Landing Craft Flotilla will send 3 naval ferry barges to the patrol line off Kamish Burun,
- b. 3 boats of 3rd Motor Minesweeper Flotilla off Eltigen,
- c. 2 boats of 1st E-Boat Flotilla between Takil and Chongelok.

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Orders for execution as before. The vessels of 3rd Motor Minesweeper Flotilla will shell the Eltigen beachhead before returning. 50 rounds will be fired by each boat at intervals. 1st Air Corps was requested to provide fighter escort for the motor minesweepers and E-boats on outward and return passage.

Western Black Sea:

Naval Group South was informed that, since UMB and UMC mines with contact release or antenna firing are not available, the proposed minefield off the Sulina estuary is to be laid in two rows in the form of a staircase at depths of minus 10 and minus 3 meters. At 1445, approximately 20 miles west of Eupatoria, an explosion occurred aboard naval ferry barge F 566 which was proceeding from Odessa to Sevastopol in a towed convoy. The boat became a complete loss and is drifting, keel upwards. The reason for the explosion is not known. On 3 December motor minesweepers (RA) will make a check sweep for moored mines outside the prescribed route where the accident occurred. The possibility of ground mines can be discounted on account of the depth of the water. No torpedo track was seen. 12 men were rescued, 4 are missing.

The anti-submarine group, comprising "Xanten" and submarine chasers Nos. 303 and 306, which left Sevastopol for the waters off Eupatoria at 1300, had to put about at 2100 owing to transmission disorders and breakdown of the hydrophones.

Commander, Convoys and Escorts, Crimean Coast received orders to dispatch the "Roller" towed convoy from Sevastopol to Odessa at midnight on 2 December. Motor minesweepers (RA) are to provide additional protection against mines as far as Tarkhankutzki and are then to check with oropesa gear the area where F 566 sank. The convoy should not leave route Green, as this route was swept in the last few days to a width of 500 meters as far as Green 39.

Naval ferry barges F 170 and F 316 will leave Yalta for Sevastopol at 1600 for a period in dock.

South Coast Crimea:

E-boat S 49 left Constantza at 1800 for Ivan Baba, after having a new propeller installed. At 1925 naval ferry barges F 342, 305 and 578 left Yalta for Theodosia for operations off Kerch. F 304, 340 and 472, which were put out of action in the Kerch operations, will leave Kamish Burun at 1600 for Theodosia.

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U-boat Situation:

U 19 arrived in Constantza at 1215 from her 15th operation (6th Black Sea operation).

The situation with regard to the Italian Submarine Flotilla is not yet entirely clear. According to a detailed report from Commander, Convoys and Escorts, the Italian barracks were found occupied by Rumanian forces and the 5 Italian midget submarines were flying Rumanian colors. Captain Macelariu, C-in-C Rumanian Naval Forces, stated that the Italian Submarine Flotilla was handed over to Rumania with a written declaration from the Commanding Admiral, as the personnel of the Italian Submarine Flotilla were no longer willing to wage war on the German side. A sharp protest has been made to the Rumanian High Command on whose orders C-in-C Naval Forces claims to have acted. This protest was supported by Naval Group South. All equipment and personnel at Sevastopol have been taken into German custody (1 petty officer, 2 men and varying equipment).

Minesweeping Activity:

Motor minesweepers (RA) made a check sweep in Eupatoria Bay to a width of 500 meters. No mines were swept.

Supply Traffic:

At 0735 an ineffective submarine attack was made on the Odessa-Sevastopol towed convoy in air grid square 2653. The same convoy was attacked at 1040 off Karacha by 3 Russian bombers and 5 fighters. No damage was reported. No other incidents in convoy traffic.

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3 December, 1943

Simferopol

Enemy Situation:

There was no night reconnaissance because of the weather. In varying visibility 4 planes covered the central and eastern Black Sea during the day. No enemy shipping was seen. There was no reconnaissance of the Caucasus coast. A freighter of 3,000 tons was sighted on course east, in Turkish territorial waters, approximately 15 miles northeast of Ayanzik. Two other freighters were seen about 5 miles north of Ayanzik, course east, and a passenger vessel of 5,000 tons about 5 miles northeast of Bafra Burnu, course west.

At 2150 night reconnaissance reported 2 vessels, probably coastal vessels, and 3 M.T.B.s, course north, medium speed, approximately 25 miles northwest of Tuapse.

Main Naval D/F Station Reports:

According to the radio picture, there was no activity of surface forces during the night.

Submarines detected: 4 in the northwestern Black Sea to west and southwest of the Crimea; according to radio intelligence, 2 more were operating approximately 60 miles south of Cape Khersonese. One submarine was homeward bound and another was at sea, position unknown.

Own Situation:

Weather forecast:

W - NW winds, force 3 - 4; along the west coast of the Crimea temporarily force 5, cloudy, rain in patches, visibility 10 miles, sea 2 - 3.

Crimea and Kerch Strait:

- a. Last night nothing was sighted by naval ferry barges, motor minesweepers and E-boats in patrol line off Kerch Strait. The beachhead was shelled by motor minesweepers and E-boats at 0300. No landing operations. All boats returned to base.
- b. According to a report from Naval Gunnery Detachment 613, there was ferry traffic to the northern beachhead during the day under cover of smoke screens. No Russian air activity over the southern beachhead. Routine shelling

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by batteries. Isolated bombs were dropped by Russian planes during the night in the coastal area. Shelling from Kossa Chushka during the night, no shelling during the day.

c. Land Situation:

Morning: At the point of penetration on the Perekop front, the enemy was forced to withdraw still further northeast of Kula.

An attack to annihilate the enemy is in progress. The dam under construction north of Russki has been completed. Thus a connection with the enemy beachhead has been established across the Sivash.

With the exception of heavy attacks by enemy ground attack planes, there was no action at the beachheads on Kerch Strait.

Evening: The enemy penetration on the Perekop front was mopped up with the exception of a few pockets of resistance. Enemy concentrations near Hill 17.6 were shelled by our guns. All quiet at the beachheads.

Operations ordered for the night of 3/4 December:

Commander, 1st Landing Craft Flotilla will send 3 naval ferry barges to the patrol line off Kamish Burun. At dusk, 6 boats of 1st E-Boat Flotilla will be stationed between Takil and Kamish Burun, concentrating on Eltigen.

According to a report received here, the enemy is expected to make an attempt to bring up more supplies to the Eltigen beachhead in the coming night.

Commanders, 1st E-Boat Flotilla and 1st Landing Craft Flotilla have received orders to prevent the reinforcement of the enemy forces in the Eltigen beachhead at all costs. As the enemy will most probably try to make the most of the twilight to bring through their supplies, 1st E-Boat Flotilla will pass Cape Takil on outward passage at 1600 at the latest and on return passage at 0430 at the earliest. Before turning about, the E-boats will bombard the Eltigen beachhead with 4 cm. guns.

The naval ferry barges and E-boats were in position at 1630. The patrol line off Eltigen was manned by only 5 E-boats, as S 47 had to return to Ivan Baba at 1600 because of engine trouble. 1st Air Corps was requested to provide fighter escort for the E-boats while outward and homeward bound.

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Western Black Sea:

It is believed that the "Diogenes" towed convoy was probably attacked twice by the same submarine on 2 December and that naval ferry barge F 566 was torpedoed in the second attack.

Since slow towed convoys are especially vulnerable owing to the fact that submarines can gain a submerged lurking position ahead of them, Commander, Convoys and Escorts, Black Sea received orders not to employ naval ferry barges loaded with valuable cargo (e.g. assault guns) to protect slow convoys or to attach them to such convoys. They must be used to make the most of their maximum speed, passing the especially dangerous Tarkhankutzki-Cape Lukull area during the night.

Commander, German Naval Command was informed that we approve the laying of minefield S 76 in the Sulina estuary. Naval Shore Commander, Ukraine reported that, in view of the enemy situation, the Henke regiment had evacuated all cranes, bridge sections and barges from Kherson and the mouth of the Dnieper Delta to Ochakov on the night of 2/3 December without suffering any losses. According to a report from Naval Harbor Master, Ochakov, naval gunnery lighter No. 4, which has been operating as a floating battery off Pervomaisk, has been bombarding the enemy on Kimburn Peninsula continuously since 10 November. 700 rounds have been fired up to now.

The commander of naval ferry barge F 566 stated that the boat was hit by a torpedo launched by a submarine west of Eupatoria. A second torpedo passed astern. F 566 had 3 assault guns and an armored reconnaissance car on board.

Submarine chasers Nos. 102 and 103 left Sevastopol at 1545 for the Tarkhankutzki-Eupatoria area to carry out anti-submarine operations. At 2131 a surfaced submarine was shelled in air grid square 2677.

"Xanten" reported that at 2209, while under way from Sevastopol to Constantza, a submerging submarine was sighted approximately 30 miles southwest of Tarkhankutzki.

Commander, Convoys and Escorts, Black Sea was ordered to send 4 boats of 23rd Submarine Chaser Flotilla on anti-submarine patrol west of Tarkhankutzki from 4 December.

Commander, Convoys and Escorts, Crimean Coast received orders to send naval ferry barges F 395, 401 and 447 from Sevastopol to Theodosia at 1400 to strengthen the patrol line in Kerch Strait.

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South Coast Crimea:

Naval ferry barges F 578, 305 and 342, which left Yalta for operations in Kerch Strait, arrived at Theodosia at 0645.

Naval ferry barges F 304, 340 and 472, which are temporarily out of action, arrived at Theodosia from Kamish Burun at 0740.

U-boat Situation:

U 20 reported that she would commence return passage from the operational area to Constantza on 4 December.

Enemy Air Activity:

Several planes dropped bombs on Ochakov at 1403. No damage was reported.

Minesweeping Activity:

Two motor minesweepers (RA) made a check sweep of the area west of Eupatoria where F 566 sank. Two minesweeping planes were in action over the Danube Delta. No mines were swept in 3 checks.

Supply Traffic:

With the exception of 1 Sevastopol-Odessa towed convoy, which put in to Ak Mechet because of the weather, convoys in the western Black Sea and off the south coast of the Crimea ran as scheduled without incident.

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4 December, 1943

Simferopol

Enemy Situation:

A small convoy was sighted by night reconnaissance off Tuapse. No enemy vessels were sighted in the entire Black Sea area. A freighter of 2,000 tons on a westerly course was sighted off the Turkish coast approximately 8 miles northeast of Ayanzik. A coastal vessel of 600 tons on a southeasterly course was detected approximately 10 miles east of Sinope and a freighter of 4-5,000 tons was observed on a westerly course 8 miles north of Bafra Burnu.

According to aerial photographic reconnaissance, the following vessels were in port:

Fishery Ilich (partly obscured): 1 wreck (old), 2 large and 8 small coastal vessels and approximately 5 boats.

Kossa Chushka headland: 3 coastal vessels on varying courses, 3 ferries, 2 medium and 3 small coastal vessels, approximately 30 boats, some beached, and 1 wreck (old).

Kossa Tuszla headland: 1 small coastal vessel, course west, medium speed, and what appeared to be wrecks along the coast.

Taman: 2 M.T.B.s, 7 small armed coastal vessels, 10 small coastal vessels, 6 ferries and approximately 20 boats.

Fishery Krotkoff: 4 vessels, apparently motor gunboats, and about 5 boats.

Cape Kany jetty: 3 boats.

Cape Kuchugury jetty: about 5 boats.

Senaya Bay: 16 motor landing craft, 1 small coastal vessel and approximately 10 boats, some beached.

Gluchoi channel (very misty): 2 motor gunboats, 4 pontoon ferries, and 1 lighter of about 500 tons in the Kuban estuary.

No essential changes in the number of ships in port since the last reconnaissance.

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Main Naval D/F Station Reports:

Slight activity of small coastal vessels continued. Two minesweepers were detected between the central and southern parts of the east coast.

Submarines detected: 4 in the northwestern Black Sea to the area west and southwest of the Crimea, one of which was heard being called. According to intelligence, 2 more submarines were probably in the operational area. One submarine was intercepted between the central and eastern Black Sea.

Own Situation:

Weather forecast:

Light variable winds, mainly fair, visibility 10 miles, early mist, sea 1 - 2.

Naval Group South was informed of the present naval ferry barge situation:

30 boats operational, 5 operational with limitations and 31 out of action. Since 1 November, 14 naval ferry barges have been lost and 16 damaged by enemy action. The number of naval ferry barges is now insufficient to execute the urgent escort and supply tasks. As further serious losses are to be expected considering the present situation in the Black Sea, Group South has been requested to do all in their power to speed up the completion and transfer of naval ferry barges under construction.

Crimea and Kerch Strait:

- a. Nothing was reported by the naval ferry barges in patrol line off Kamish Burun last night. At 0130 1st E-Boat Flotilla attacked 2 motor gunboats in Kerch Strait off Eltigen; they were probably on reconnaissance. Returning our fire with rocket-firing and 5.7 cm. guns, the enemy withdrew at once at high speed in a southeasterly direction.

The E-boats were bombed several times by enemy planes between 1840 and 0330. An engine in one of the boats was put out of action by blast. Casualties were suffered. There were no seaborne supplies to the beachhead.

Lively air supply traffic was observed.

b. Land Situation:

Morning: 6th Rumanian Cavalry Division launched an attack against Eltigen. By 0800 several breakthroughs had been made in the main enemy defense line and a few reinforced points had been taken. Lively enemy activity at the Baksy beachhead seems to indicate the imminence of an attack to relieve Eltigen.

Reconnaissance thrusts and another attempted breakthrough were repulsed on the Perokop front.

Evening: Our own attack from the south against the Eltigen beachhead advanced as far as the lighthouse at Werchn Burun. The attack from the west made only little headway. The attack will be continued early on 5 December. The enemy attacks on the Baksy beachhead launched after heavy preparatory shelling (about 35,000 rounds fired by 5 or 6 divisions and 25 tanks) were repulsed after heavy fighting in front of our main defense line. 13 tanks were put out of action. It was a complete defensive success. No fighting worth mentioning on the northern front. The enemy is receiving continuous reinforcements in the Sivash beachhead. An attack is expected shortly.

Operations ordered for the night of 4/5 December:

The Army commenced the attack on the Eltigen beachhead this morning at 0500. The enemy will do everything in their power to bring reinforcements to the beachhead by sea. I have therefore ordered a reinforcement of the patrol lines.

With special reference to the situation in the beachhead, the following order was issued to Commanders, 1st Landing Craft Flotilla and 3rd Motor Minesweeper Flotilla:

- a. Commander, 1st Landing Craft Flotilla is to send 3 naval ferry barges to the patrol line off Kamish Burun. The 6 naval ferry barges which left Theodosia at 1030 should occupy the patrol line off Eltigen. They should shell the northern part of the present beachhead between 0300 and 0400 with 20 shells each from their 7.5 cm. guns, aimed to fall between the coast and 400 meters inland. As the southern part of the beachhead is in our hands, the bombardment should only be carried out if the targets can be seen clearly. The boats will return to Kamish Burun after dawn or, if there is mist, when it has lifted.

- b. Three boats of 3rd Motor Minesweeper Flotilla are to occupy the patrol line between Cape Takil and Chongelek. The boats will leave Theodosia at 1500 at maximum speed. At 0330 they will commence return passage to Theodosia. No fighter escort will be available.

All patrol lines were occupied as scheduled. The naval ferry barges off Kamish Burun made contact with 5 enemy M.T.B.s at 1841.

At 2335 the patrol force off Eltigen had an engagement with 4 or 5 gunboats and landing craft.

- c. Naval Shore Commander, Caucasus received orders to inform 5th Army Corps that the beachhead was going to be shelled, and to arrange for our own forces to fire white stars at once, should our own lines be bombarded by mistake. It should also be pointed out to 5th Army Corps that as it is necessary to blockade the beachhead until dawn, the naval ferry barges will enter Kamish Burun in spite of the grave danger from gunfire and planes. The risk will be taken with a view to supporting the mopping-up of the beachhead to the last. 1st Air Corps was informed.

Western Black Sea:

Commander, Naval Air, Black Sea reported that the Rumanian fighter squadrons in Akkermann and Sadki could not act as fighter escort for convoys, as they are primarily intended as local defense for Odessa, Sulina and Akkermann.

On the basis of this report, it was pointed out to 4th Air Force that, in view of the ever-increasing enemy air activity, a further weakening of fighter protection for convoys would certainly result in irreplacable losses in freighter tonnage. Seaborne supplies to the Crimea, for which even now there are not enough ships, would become even more precarious. If Rumania should insist on limiting fighter protection, it would not be possible to transfer German fighters solely for the purpose of escorting convoys.

Naval Liaison Officer reported to Army Group A that according to a report from Naval Shore Commander, Ukraine the enemy had started to attack Kimburn and that the Rumanians were expected to evacuate the peninsula. It was especially emphasized that in the event of an evacuation of the western part of Kimburn, the Odessa-Ochakov-Nikolaiev sea route could no

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longer be used. It was therefore vital to hold the position.

The area west of Eupatoria where F 566 sank was checked by motor minesweepers (RA). No mines were found. The commander's statement that the naval ferry barge was sunk by a torpedo would thus seem to be substantiated. Five submarine chasers are on patrol in the Eupatoria-Cape Tarkhankutzki area. At 1030 submarine chasers Nos. 102 and 103 were unsuccessfully attacked by a submarine with 2 torpedoes. Anti-submarine operations were started at once. Oil and air bubbles were seen after the third depth charge attack. A Russian fire-extinguisher floated to the surface and was salvaged. Search gear could not be used because of the rough sea. The submarine chasers returned to Sevastopol to take in more depth charges.

Mines are suspected to have been laid off Kherson as low-flying planes were seen in this area. The Sevastopol-Balaklava route was closed to shipping. A sweep will be made early on 5 December.

At 1600 2 repair barges from Kerch Strait and 1 naval ferry barge (tanks) left Theodosia for Sevastopol.

1st Air Corps was informed that 9 naval ferry barges would be in Kamish Burun on 5 December and that strong enemy air attacks were to be expected. Fighter protection was requested.

U-boat Situation:

U 20 commenced return passage to Constantza from the operational area to refuel.

Brief report from U 19 (6th Black Sea operation):

11 November: Outward bound via the northern route. Nothing to report.

15 November: At 1535 sighted smoke, bearing 235°, and pursued it at full speed without success.

16 November: Lost sight of it at 1700 in darkness. Sighted a tanker convoy at 1900, shadowed it, transmitting D/F signals, and then attacked.

At 2130 fired a fan-of-three torpedoes, angle on the bow 70°, enemy speed 11 knots, angle of spread 2°, range 4,500 meters,

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torpedo type T 4, magnetic firing. There was a destroyer ahead of the convoy and 4 guardboats acting as remote escort.

Moonlight night. Torpedoes missed the target. Continued to shadow the convoy until it was off Tuapse. Remained in the operational area until 2000 on 25 November when transferred. Sighted nothing and observed only slight air activity.

27 November: At 2020 attacked a westbound submarine with a single torpedo. The torpedo missed as the enemy altered course. Had to give up the pursuit as the enemy had superior speed.. With the exception of submarine chasers, nothing was seen in the operational area.

29 November: Commenced return passage via the southern route. Nothing to report.

2 December: At 1215 arrived at Constantza.

Enemy Air Activity:

Ochakov was bombed at 0920. 13 planes made another attack at 1405. No damage reported.

Minesweeping Activity:

Two motor minesweepers (RA) made a check sweep in the area where naval ferry barge F 566 sank and continued minesweeping on route Green with oropesa gear, 15-meter pendant. No mines were swept. Two minesweeping planes were operating over the Danube Delta. No mines were swept in 6 checks in 4 different areas.

Supply Traffic:

Convoys in the western Black Sea ran as scheduled without incident.

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5 December, 1943

Simferopol

Enemy Situation:

No enemy shipping was sighted during night reconnaissance along the Caucasus coast and over the northwestern Black Sea and no vessels were detected in the course of exhaustive daylight reconnaissance over the entire Black Sea, including the Caucasus coast as far as Cape Pitsunda.

A passenger vessel of 3,000 tons was sighted, course east, in Turkish territorial waters off Cape Sinope. A freighter of 5,000 tons was also sighted, course west, 15 miles northwest of Bafra Burnu, and a freighter of 3,000 tons, course southeast, off Amasra. There were no enemy shipping movements in the western Sea of Azov.

According to photographic reconnaissance between 30 November and 4 December, the enemy had the following boats and small naval craft in Kerch Strait (Taman Peninsula) from Temriuk to Cape Tuzla, and on the Kerch Peninsula from Cape Chroni to Cape Kany and Eltigen:

- 15 small armed vessels,
- 9 motor gunboats,
- 3 M.T.B.s,
- 28 motor landing craft,
- 5 tugs for the motor landing craft,
- 17 ferries,
- 5 coastal vessels (small)

and 180 boats.

The ferry traffic in the northern part of Kerch Strait is concentrated in the narrow area between Kossa Chushka and the jetties on the Kerch side between Gloiki, grid square 66642 and Cape Kany, grid square 66648. Most of the ferry traffic runs during the night. The boats which attempt to get seaborne supplies to the Eltigen beach-head each night leave Taman and other jetties as far as Krotkoff. So far, our naval forces have prevented them from doing so.

Results of photographic reconnaissance:

Gluchoi channel (out of focus): 2 large motor gunboats, 4 craft, probably ferries, and 7 probable boats.

Channel near Achtanisevka: 2 ferries and about 15 boats.

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Fishery Ilich: 1 large motor gunboat, 1 small motor gunboat, 1 coastal vessel of 750 tons, 1 paddle steamer about 50 meters long, and about 22 boats.

Main Naval D/F Station Reports:

Continued activity of small coastal vessels. Three further M.T.B.s were intercepted off the northern part of the east coast.

Submarines detected: 2 in the northwestern Black Sea and the area west and southwest of the Crimea, 4 more probably in the operational area and 1 in the eastern Black Sea.

Own Situation:

Weather forecast:

Entire Crimean Coast: Variable winds, force 2 - 3, cloudy, visibility 10 miles, sea 2.

Ak Mechet: Winds temporarily W, force 4 - 5, sea 3.

Crimea and Kerch Strait:

- a. Group South was informed that General Jaenecke, Commanding General, 17th Army H.Q., sent the following radiogram to C-in-C Navy direct on 5 December:

"On the night of 4/5 December, the Russians made a great effort to bring up fresh forces and supplies to the heavily battered Eltigen beachhead, to which in the last few days only air supplies had got through. This attempt, as all others, was repulsed by the coastal defense forces of Admiral, Black Sea although they suffered heavy losses. In gratitude for such effective help, I would like to say the following:

The operations of the naval forces of Admiral, Black Sea in the battle for the beachheads are decisive and, in spite of the serious losses, indispensable. This type of operation is of great significance in the defense of the Crimea as it obviously demonstrates to the Russians the difficulties of fresh landings, and has so far stopped them from making any."

Appendix to para. 2:

Admiral, Black Sea is of the same opinion with regard to the importance of the Kerch operations. It must be pointed out, however, that the very great losses in naval ferry

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barges in Kerch Strait will cause a shortage of shipping for Crimea supplies, and will in the long run lead to an impossible situation because of the supply demands of 17th Army H.Q. Commanding Admiral brought this to the notice of C-in-C on 2 December.

- b. At 0045 9 naval ferry barges from the patrol line in Kerch Strait put in to Kamish Burun, and at 0620 3 motor minesweepers put in to Theodosia.

At 1840 the naval ferry barges off Kamish Burun fought off 5 enemy M.T.B.s with guns after they had been attacked with torpedoes. At 2330 the naval ferry barges off Eltigen had an engagement with motor gunboats and landing craft which were on their way to Eltigen. Two motor gunboats, 1 tug and 1 barge with ammunition were sunk in this action.

The remaining enemy forces, consisting of about 5 vessels, withdrew to the east. Aboard the naval ferry barges, there were 2 men seriously wounded and 7 slightly wounded. No supplies got through. The motor minesweepers made no enemy contact. While homeward bound, they were machine-gunned by 2 fighters about 15 miles east of Theodosia. There were several casualties aboard one of the motor minesweepers.

c. Land Situation:

Morning: At 0700 the attack on the Eltigen beachhead was renewed. Since 0600 the enemy has again been attacking the Baksy beachhead near Kolonka and south of Bulganak, supported by tanks..

Only patrol activity on the Sivash front.

Evening: More ground was gained in the attack on the Eltigen beachhead. Several field fortifications and fortified heights were taken. All enemy attacks in the Baksy beachhead were repulsed despite strong enemy tank support. Nine tanks were put out of action.

Slight shelling and infantry activity on the northern front.

Operations ordered for the night of 5/6 December:

Commanders, 1st Landing Craft Flotilla and 3rd Motor Minesweeper Flotilla were informed of the situation at the Eltigen beachhead, and of the

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possibility that the enemy might renew their attempts to bring up reinforcements by sea in the coming night. They received the following orders:

- a. From dusk 3 naval ferry barges will occupy the patrol line off Kamish Burun and 6 others between Kamish Burun and Chongelek, concentrating off Eltigen.

The 6 naval ferry barges off Eltigen will bombard the enemy beachhead between 0300 and 0400 between Kilometers 45 and 47.5, each firing 30 rounds from their 7.5 cm. guns. The fire should fall between the coast and 400 meters inland. All naval ferry barges will return to Kamish Burun after dawn.

- b. 3rd Motor Minesweeper Flotilla will send 3 boats to the patrol line between Takil and Chongelek. Times of sailing etc. as for yesterday.

The patrol lines were occupied in good time. The disposition of forces off Kamish Burun and Eltigen had to be changed as F 305 and F 369 were lost in an air raid on Kamish Burun at 1130, while F 447 was put out of action. There were therefore only 2 naval ferry barges in the patrol line off Kamish Burun and 4 off Eltigen.

Western Black Sea:

Naval Harbor Master, Ochakov reported that Kimburn Peninsula had been in enemy hands since morning.

The occupation of Kimburn Peninsula by the Russians means that naval and supply traffic between Kherson, Nikolaiev and Odessa must be discontinued. In addition, it prevents the removal of valuable equipment such as docks, cranes and ships before the freezing starts. This will cause further shortages for supply shipping.

The obstacles to seaborne supplies in the north-western Black Sea brought about by this situation were pointed out to Army Group A, Naval Group South, 17th Army H.Q. and 4th Air Force in A.S.M. Gkdos. 8025 A I. Admiral, Black Sea stated that in his opinion it was absolutely necessary to reoccupy Kimburn Peninsula, and proposed that a quick landing should be made near Prognoyk, to mop up the area in a westerly direction and at the same time reoccupy the point opposite Ochakov.

Four submarine chasers left Ak Mechet at 0600 to carry out anti-submarine operations in the

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Eupatoria-Tarkhankutzki area. At 1615 3 submarine chasers returned to Ak Mechet from anti-submarine patrol. Route Brown was reopened to traffic from Sevastopol to Balaklava after being swept for moored mines. At 1600 E-boat S 49 left Ivan Baba for Sevastopol for repairs to her compass. She had to put in to Balaklava at 2100 because of the weather.

Commander, 1st E-Boat Flotilla received orders to send 2 boats off Cape Utrich and 3 boats off Cape Idokopas to operate against the enemy shipping off the Caucasus coast on the night of 5/6 December. Boats are permitted to use torpedoes against worthwhile targets.

All boats should leave Ivan Baba in closed formation at 1430. The first 2 boats should start return passage at 0300, the group of 3 at 0200. Boats are free to attack submarines. 1st Air Corps was requested to send the Lichtenstein reconnaissance plane to cooperate with E-boats from 1900 to 0200 in the Tuapse-Anapa area.

The boats put out from Ivan Baba according to plan at 1430. The boats arrived in position at 1810 and the group of 3 at 1925. The commander of the force reported that the boats put about at 2100 because of the weather (SSW winds, force 4 - 5, sea 4, high swell from the southwest) and re-entered Ivan Baba at 0200.

U-boat Situation:

The boats in the operational area received orders to tune in from now on at the additional routine call-up times on the long wave between 1100 and 1300.

With the return of U 20, U 9 is the only boat in the operational area. U 9 is therefore to proceed through the operational area under cover of the coast, making the most of all opportunities to attack in the area south of Tuapse, which is the only point of convergence for all the supply traffic from the southeastern ports.

Minesweeping Activity:

Two motor minesweepers (RA) continued minesweeping in Eupatoria Bay with oropesa gear, 15-motor pendant, covering a width of approximately 1,000 meters. No mines were swept.

Supply Traffic:

Convoys in the western Black Sea and along the south coast of the Crimea ran as scheduled without incident.

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6 December, 1943

Simferopol

Enemy Situation:

At 2125 night reconnaissance reported 5 small vessels on northwesterly course about 5 miles south of Cape Zhelezni Rog. The reconnaissance plane bombed and sank two of these vessels.

The E-boats operating off the Caucasus coast and 3 motor minesweepers in the patrol line south of Eltigen were informed of the results of the reconnaissance. No enemy shipping traffic was observed during the day in the whole of the Black Sea.

A coastal vessel of 500 tons was sighted on a westerly course off the Turkish coast about 6 miles northwest of Ayanzik, and a passenger vessel of 4,000 tons, course west, 8 miles northeast of Ayanzik. Another passenger vessel of 5,000 tons was located, course east, 8 miles northwest of Bafra Burnu.

Main Naval D/F Station Reports:

Two M.T.B.s were intercepted off the northern part of the east coast of the Black Sea. No other shipping was detected. Two more M.T.B.s were intercepted during the night off the northern part of the east coast as far as Kerch Strait. One minesweeper was operating off the southern part of the east coast.

Submarines detected: Bearings were taken on a submarine operating in the northwestern Black Sea to the west coast of the Crimea; another submarine was heard being called. According to radio inference, 4 more submarines were in the operational area.

Own Situation:

Weather forecast:

N winds, force 4 - 5, squalls up to 6, mainly overcast, showers, visibility 6 miles, later 10 - 12 miles, sea 3. During the course of the night the weather improved slightly.

Crimea and Kerch Strait:

- a. The patrol lines had a quiet night. With the exception of 2 E-boats, nothing was seen by the naval ferry barges and motor minesweepers.

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Eltigen was bombarded by the naval ferry barges with 7.5 cm. guns about 0400.

All vessels returned to base.

- b. One IL 2 plane was brought down by 2nd Battery, Naval Gunnery Detachment 613. 1st Battery suffered a direct hit and 2 guns were damaged. The ammunition burned out. One man was killed.

c. Land Situation:

Morning: Fighting continued at the Eltigen beachhead where the enemy was encircled. Attempts to break through to the west were repulsed. German and enemy patrol activity northeast of Kerch and along the northern front.

Evening: More ground was gained in the attack on the Eltigen beachhead. According to an Army forecast, the beachhead will be in our hands on the evening of 7 December. Only weak enemy relief attacks in the Baksy beachhead. All quiet on the northern front.

Despite the tremendous strain already, the situation at the Eltigen beachhead demands further effort by the few remaining forces to stop traffic of every kind during the coming nights.

I therefore ordered the following operations for the night of 6/7 December:

Commanders, 1st Landing Craft Flotilla and 3rd Motor Minesweeper Flotilla received orders to occupy the patrol lines in Kerch Strait as on the previous night, that is:

- a. 2 naval ferry barges off Kamish Burun
- b. 4 naval ferry barges off Eltigen
- c. 3 motor minesweepers between Chongelek and Takil.

The naval ferry barges will not shell the Eltigen beachhead, as only a 1.3 km. stretch is still in enemy hands, and they might shell our own positions by mistake.

Task and sailing orders as for yesterday. The boats took up their positions at dusk. At midnight, the naval ferry barges off Eltigen reported that they had stopped a returning transport and taken prisoners. It thus seems that the enemy is trying to evacuate the beachhead by sea.

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Western Black Sea:

Group South reported that until further notice it would not be possible to distribute EMC mines and that the minefields should if possible be changed to EMF mines. In this connection, Group ordered that the statement of monthly requirements, including proposed minelaying operations, should be sent in on the 20th of each month.

It was pointed out to Group that in view of the changing situation in the Black Sea it was not always possible to plan minefields so far in advance, and also, because of the length of the supply routes and delays in delivery, it seemed necessary to build up a reserve of mines in the area for operations which had to be carried out at short notice. For this purpose, 500 moored mines, if possible UMB or EMC mines, and 300 explosive floats were requested.

Tugs "Sofia" and "Pontonk", lying about 500 meters off the port of Ochakov, were shelled at about 2145 by our own artillery. Several hits were scored on "Sofia" above the waterline.

Commander, Convoys and Escorts, Black Sea reported that he planned to lay minefield S 76 (Eupatoria Bay) during the night of 7/8 December.

The place where "Santa Fe" was wrecked in Eupatoria Bay was swept for moored mines. No mines were found. Anti-submarine operations were carried out in the Eupatoria-Tarkhankutzki area by 4 submarine chasers.

At 0905 E-boat S 49 put in to Sevastopol for compass repairs.

South Coast Crimea:

Five boats of 1st E-Boat Flotilla put in to Ivan Baba at 0230 as weather conditions off the Caucasus coast (SSW winds, force 6, sea 5) made operations impossible.

U-boat Situation:

U 20, which had lost fuel while returning from the operational area, put in to Sevastopol to take on additional supplies. Otherwise nothing to report.

Minesweeping Activity:

Motor minesweepers (RA) continued minesweeping on route Green off Eupatoria. No mines were swept.

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Four FZ-boats carried out a check sweep of the area where minelaying had been suspected off Tarkhankutzki.

Two minesweeping planes operated in the Danube area. No mines were swept in 4 checks.

New Gun Carriers:

Linz airfield reported that gun carriers AF 53, AF 54, AF 55 and AF 56, which are destined for the Black Sea area, left Linz on 5 December to proceed via the Danube.

Supply Traffic:

Several ships lost contact with their convoys in the western Black Sea because of the weather. However, they arrived at their destinations without incident and without being located by the enemy.

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7 December, 1943

Simferopol

Enemy Situation:

No enemy shipping was observed by night reconnaissance over the area southeast of the Crimea and no enemy vessels were sighted by air reconnaissance during the day in the central and eastern Black Sea.

The Caucasus coast was not examined. At 0940 one of the reconnaissance planes bombed and machine-gunned an enemy submarine approximately 20 miles northwest of Eupatoria. It has not yet been established whether the submarine was destroyed or damaged.

Main Naval D/F Station Reports:

Activity of small vessels still on a small scale in the entire Black Sea.

Submarines detected: 3 in the northwestern Black Sea to west and southwest of the Crimea, 3 thought to be in the operational area and 1 in the eastern Black Sea. The submarine, which was pursued and perhaps destroyed by submarine chaser No. 103 on 4 December, can now only be either "U" or "W", as they have not been heard in radio traffic since this engagement took place. Investigations to confirm destruction of the submarine are in progress.

Own Situation:

Weather forecast:

West coast Crimea: W - SW winds, force 3, mainly fair, visibility 15 miles, sea 1 - 2.

Yalta - Kerch Strait: NW winds, force 4, at noon W winds, force 4 - 3, cloudy, visibility 12 miles, sea 2.

Crimea and Kerch Strait:

- a. Since the daily operations of light naval forces have prevented enemy seaborne reinforcements from reaching the Eltigen beachhead since 1 November, 6th Rumanian Cavalry Division was able to mop up the beachhead early on 7 December.

On the night of 6/7 December, naval ferry barges off Eltigen sank 2 landing craft which

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were carrying troops, 2 fishing smacks, 1 barge and 2 rafts in which the enemy was trying to escape across the sea. Prisoners were picked up from the water. Thus the number of vessels sunk during the blockade of the beachhead by our naval forces was increased to:

- 8 motor gunboats,
- 2 M.T.B.s,
- 16 landing craft,
- 2 tugs,
- 2 lighters, and
- 7 other craft.

Eleven gunboats, 2 M.T.B.s and 6 landing craft were damaged or set on fire.

The following German forces have been in action in Kerch Strait since 1 November:

- 40 naval ferry barges,
- 6 motor minesweepers, and
- 6 E-boats.

On 35 days they carried out 368 single operations in patrol lines and prevented all enemy seaborne supplies from getting through.

Our own losses, mainly caused by bombs, amounted to 11 naval ferry barges destroyed, while 16 naval ferry barges, 4 motor minesweepers and 1 E-boat were damaged.

Casualties: 16 men killed, 32 missing and 74 wounded.

It was the continuous daily operations of naval ferry barges, motor minesweepers and E-boats which made it possible to mop up the Eltigen beachhead. In view of our small reserves, had this beachhead been enlarged, it would have resulted in the loss of Kerch and also of Kerch Peninsula. In numerous encounters, these flotillas repulsed an enemy superior in numbers and sometimes also in armament, causing them serious losses and preventing supplies from getting through to the beachhead. Our own losses were justified by the success, a success which increases in importance through its indirect effect on the enemy and any further landings they may intend.

b. Land Situation:

Morning: The Eltigen beachhead is in our hands. Several hundred Russian soldiers broke through to the north with the Divisional Staff and gained a foothold in the southern sector of

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Kerch. Counter-attacks are in progress. German and enemy patrol activity at the Baksy beachhead and along the northern front.

Evening: The enemy force which broke through from the Eltigen beachhead occupied houses in the southern sector of Kerch and Mitridat Hill. They were surrounded there by local forces, mostly emergency units. It is planned to annihilate them on 8 December. In the diversionary attacks at the northern beachhead, the enemy successfully broke through in various places on both sides of the Kolonka-Kerch coastal highway. Mopping-up operations in progress. All quiet on the northern front.

As it was possible that the enemy might try on the night of 7/8 December to evacuate or reinforce by sea the troops which broke through to Kerch, I considered it best to concentrate the patrol forces in Kerch Bay in the coming night. I therefore issued the following orders:

- a. After dusk, Commander, 1st Landing Craft Flotilla will send 4 naval ferry barges to the patrol line off Kerch Bay and 2 naval ferry barges to Kamish Burun Bay. The boats will return to Kamish Burun at dawn on 8 December.
- b. Three boats of 3rd Motor Minesweeper Flotilla will occupy the patrol line off Eltigen. The boats will leave Theodosia at 1430 and will commence return passage at 0400.

The situation in Kerch and the tasks of the patrol lines for the coming night were explained in detail to the commanders taking part in the operations.

In an Army communique issued by 17th Army H.Q. on 3 December on the reorganization of the Army, C-in-C requested me to take over the following tasks with the naval forces available:

- a. Protection of the east coast and the seaward flanks of Kerch Peninsula with a view to detecting enemy landing attempts promptly, attacking any such enemy forces while still at sea and warning our coastal defenses in the event of an enemy attack.
- b. Continuation of the blockade of the Eltigen beachhead until it has been mopped up. (This will not be necessary as the beachhead was captured this morning.)
- c. Protection of Army seaborne supplies.

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Western Black Sea:

While entering the port of Ochakov at 0900 on 6 December, tugs "Kiel" and "Pawle" were shelled by enemy batteries on Kimburn. "Kiel" received a hit aft.

Four submarine chasers carried out anti-submarine operations off Tarkhankutski.

U-boat Situation:

At 1100 U 20 arrived in Sevastopol from offensive patrol. After taking on fuel, the boat will continue to Constantza at about 2100.

Minesweeping Activity:

Minesweeping was carried out by 4 FZ-boats off Ak Mechet and 2 motor minesweepers (RA) in Eupatoria Bay. No mines were swept.

Two minesweeping planes checked the Danube from Giurgiu to 50 km. upstream, as it was suspected that the enemy had laid aerial mines. No mines were swept. Another minesweeping plane operated over the Danube Delta. Two checks were made but no mines swept.

Supply Traffic:

Convoys in the western Black Sea and along the south coast of the Crimea ran as scheduled without incident.

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8 December, 1943

Simferopol

Enemy Situation:

Five planes flew daylight reconnaissance over the entire Black Sea but located no enemy shipping.

Night reconnaissance had to be canceled because of the weather. A drifting mine was sunk north of Cape Lukull.

A coastal vessel of 500 tons was sighted off the Turkish coast 15 miles northeast of Cide and a small steamer close to the shore 8 miles west of Cide. An auxiliary sailing vessel of 300 tons was located, course south, about 10 miles east of Sinope.

Main Naval D/F Station Reports:

One M.T.B. was intercepted off the northern part of the east coast. One destroyer was probably in a base on the northern Caucasus coast, probably Ghelenjik. A minesweeper was intercepted between the northern and central parts of the east coast and an M.T.B. off the southern part of the east coast. In general, activity of small vessels was slight.

Submarines detected: 1 in the operational area, 5 more probably in this area and 1 in the eastern Black Sea. Main Naval D/F Station, Eupatoria still has no definite details regarding the probable sinking of an enemy submarine on 4 December. All the submarines at sea on 4 December have been heard transmitting with the exception of submarine "W". Several radiograms were sent to her by control, but these have not been answered up to now.

At twilight, a few boats landed at the southern Kerch beachhead without being seen. The naval ferry barges had left their positions just beforehand in order to be able to pass Pavlovski channel before daylight.

It is unlikely that these boats were carrying troops, as according to Army observations the Group which broke through from Eltigen to the north has not been reinforced. Presumably this landing was for the purpose of landing supplies or evacuating troops.

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Own Situation:

Weather forecast:

West coast Crimea: S - SW winds, force 5, increasing to force 6 in the afternoon, mainly overcast, showers, visibility 10 - 12 miles, sea 3 - 4.

Yalta - Kerch Strait: SW winds, force 3 - 4, increasing to force 5 or 6, cloudy, showers, visibility 10 miles, sea 3, later 4.

Crimea and Kerch Strait:

- a. The motor minesweepers stationed in patrol line in the southern part of Kerch Strait had an engagement with a Russian gunboat which then made off to the east.

In this engagement, motor minesweeper R 196 sustained a hit in her fuel tank. She is temporarily out of action. Otherwise nothing was sighted. While homeward bound, the minesweepers were machine-gunned off Cape Chauda by 2 Russian fighters. No casualties.

In good visibility nothing was sighted by the naval ferry barges off Kerch and Kamish Burun.

- b. The port of Kamish Burun was heavily shelled from 1230 to 1540. Only little damage was suffered by the naval ferry barges. Two men were seriously wounded.

c. Land Situation:

Morning: In the mopping-up of the Eltigen beachhead, 1,562 prisoners were taken. Captured equipment has not yet been counted. The enemy group which broke through to Mitridat Hill was hommed in and 179 prisoners were taken in this operation. An enemy relief attack against the outer eastern sector of Kerch was repulsed. The main defense line is firmly in our hands.

Lively shelling on the northern front. Otherwise everything quiet.

Evening: The attack on the enemy group south of Kerch on Mitridat Hill is slowly gaining ground. Fighting continues. The enemy tank attack on the southern flank of the Baksy beachhead was repulsed.

Lively exchanges of gunfire on the northern front.

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Since the enemy group which broke through from Eltigen occupied Mitridat Hill and the coast between the southern breakwater and the petroleum harbor at Kerch, the present task of the patrol lines in Kerch Strait is to stop all enemy traffic with every means in their power. Because of the threat to our own main defense line if the enemy in the southern part of Kerch is not at once annihilated, they should under no circumstances be allowed to succeed in bringing up reinforcements of troops and supplies or in gaining a foothold in territory in which they would be difficult to locate.

Laying especial emphasis on the responsible nature of the tasks of the patrol lines in the coming nights, as they will also have a decisive influence on the development of the situation in the Kerch area, Commanders, 1st Landing Craft Flotilla and 1st E-Boat Flotilla received the following orders:

- a. Four naval ferry barges will occupy the patrol line in Kerch Bay between Ak Burnu and the southern jetty.
- b. Two naval ferry barges will be stationed between Kamish Burun and Pavlovski concentrating their attention on Pavlovski.

The naval ferry barges are to be in position at 1630 and will start return passage to Kamish Burun at 0500 at the earliest.

- c. Given favorable weather, 1st E-Boat Flotilla will send 4 boats to the patrol line between Chongelek and Eltigen.

The naval ferry barges mentioned in paras. a. and b. were in position in good time. The E-boats could not put out on account of the weather.

Western Black Sea:

In order to prevent convoy traffic being brought to a complete standstill in the Black Sea by the increasing air attacks, Group South on the basis of our report (see ASM Gkdos. 8001/43 A I and War Diary 4 December) requested Naval High Command, Naval Staff, Operations Division to cancel the order prohibiting the employment of Rumanian fighter squadrons stationed in Akkermann and Sadki as fighter escorts at once, or to transfer German fighter forces to this area without delay.

On 5 December, lighter "Sambre" was washed ashore off Kimburn in bad weather. She is a total loss.

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Anti-submarine patrol was canceled in the Tarkhankutzki area because of the weather.

Minefield S 76 was laid off Popovka according to plan by 2 naval ferry barges using 58 UMB mines.

U-boat Situation:

A motor minesweeper was in position CS 1 at 0500 to meet U 20 which was putting in to Constantza from the operational area.

Minesweeping Activity:

Minesweeping had to be canceled because of the weather.

Supply Traffic:

Convoys in the western Black Sea ran without incident.

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9 December, 1943

Simferopol

Enemy Situation:

Night reconnaissance was flown along the Caucasus coast as far as Cape Pitsunda and southeast of the Crimea. No enemy shipping was located. No enemy vessels were sighted in the course of daylight reconnaissance over the entire Black Sea. One coastal vessel of 800 tons was sighted in Turkish territorial waters approximately 12 miles east of Sinope making for Cape Sinope.

Main Naval D/F Station Reports:

Two M.T.B.s were intercepted off the northern part of the east coast, 1 motor gunboat off the central part and 2 more M.T.B.s off the southern part. The destroyer intercepted yesterday in a base on the northern part of the east coast is still there.

During the day, activity of small vessels off the northern part of the east coast to Kerch Strait increased and continued into the evening. In the evening, 2 more M.T.B.s and a submarine chaser were reported in this area. Three small vessels of an unidentified type, probably submarine chasers, were intercepted off the southern part of the east coast. One destroyer was intercepted in the southeastern Black Sea.

Submarines detected: 3 in the northwestern Black Sea and west and southwest of the Crimea.

Two more submarines were heard being called. A further submarine was thought to be in the operational area. Two submarines were operating in the eastern and central parts of the Black Sea.

Thus, with one exception, all the submarines which might have been the one attacked by submarine chaser No. 103 on 4 December have since been located.

In spite of our barrage of fire, the enemy was able to land from 5 boats approximately 500 meters south of Kerch under cover of darkness.

The boats could only have come from Kolonka, keeping close inshore where they could not be intercepted by our boats in patrol line on account of the minefield in the middle of Kerch Bay.

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Own Situation:

Weather forecast:

Western Black Sea: N winds, force 3 - 4, cloudy, visibility 15 miles, fog during the night.

Crimea and Kerch Strait:

a. Four naval ferry barges carried out a defensive patrol in Kerch Bay last night from 1630 to 0100 and from 0330 to 0530. Nothing was sighted. The weather - SW winds, force 6 - forced the naval ferry barges to leave the patrol line between 0100 and 0330, as they were in danger of drifting into our own mine-field. When entering Kamish Burun at about 0600, they were attacked by planes and shelled by artillery from the shore. No casualties were suffered. Nothing to report from the patrol line off Kamish Burun.

b. Land Situation:

Morning: The enemy group on Mitridat Hill and in the southern part of Kerch was hemmed in still further. They were not annihilated because of a strong artillery counter-attack from the Baksy beachhead. Ground attack planes bombarded the blockading troops on Mitridat Hill and the town area of Kerch. The number of prisoners taken increased to 2,294.

Isolated German and enemy patrol activity on the northern front.

Evening: After bitter close fighting, an important height was taken in the struggle for Mitridat Hill. The enemy was thrown back to the southern slope of the hill. The enemy shelled the main defense line northeast of Kerch. Only shelling took place on the northern front.

5th Army Corps reported that, after assembling the necessary combat forces for mopping up the newly-formed Kerch beachhead, the attack was to take place on 11 December.

5th Army Corps requested that all light naval forces patrol the bay to guard against enemy landing attempts and prevent all seaborne reinforcements from reaching the enemy until the attack commences.

In the coming nights, naval forces will do everything in their power to prevent a strengthening of the enemy beachhead between the petroleum

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harbor and the southern jetty. However, it must be taken into account that the Kerch beachhead cannot be as effectively blockaded as the Eltigen beachhead. The minefields in the middle of Kerch Bay force the boats in patrol line to operate in a certain area, from where, as reported under "Enemy Situation", they cannot intercept enemy vessels making for the beachhead from Kolonka if they keep close inshore.

17th Army H.Q. and 5th Army Corps were informed. At the same time, it was mentioned that our shore batteries provided a defense both against enemy landing craft close inshore, especially in the northern part of Kerch Bay as far as the port of Kerch, and against actual landings.

The following operational orders were issued to Commanders, 1st Landing Craft Flotilla and 3rd Motor Minesweeper Flotilla, with special reference to the fact that during the night of 8/9 December the enemy had landed 5 boats south of Kerch close to the barrel factory, and further landing operations were to be expected;

1. Commander, 1st Landing Craft Flotilla will send:
 - a. 2 naval ferry barges to the patrol line in Kerch Bay and 1 to point 10
 - b. 2 naval ferry barges to the patrol line off Kamish Burun.

The decrease in the number of patrol boats in Kerch Bay in comparison with last night was intended to give the naval ferry barges more freedom of action to operate against enemy forces, and make it possible for them to evade the bombardment of enemy batteries in the western part of Kerch Bay where navigation is restricted by our own minefields.

The naval ferry barges in Kerch Bay will shell the enemy beachhead with 7.5 cm. guns in accordance with an agreement with the Army. Last night, the exact stretch of the enemy-occupied coast was marked by yellow lights at either end. Boats will put out and return in accordance with yesterday's operational orders.

2. Three boats of 3rd Motor Minesweeper Flotilla will occupy the patrol line between Chongelok and Kamish. They will leave Theodosia at 1430 and will commence return passage at 0400.
3. Commander, Naval Gunnery Detachment 613 received orders to reinforce the Kerch jetty with all available small arms, such as light

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machine-guns and heavy machine-guns up to 2 cm. caliber, to combat landing craft proceeding close inshore.

The boats mentioned in paras. 1. and 2. were in position at the prescribed times. At 1710 2 M.F.B.s made an unsuccessful torpedo attack on the naval ferry barges off Kerch Bay. The M.T.B.s withdrew when one of them was hit. At 2140 the enemy commenced to shell Pavlovski channel.

Western Black Sea:

Submarine alarm was sounded at 1005 in the naval ferry barge formation which was proceeding from Odessa to Ak Mechet, 12.5 miles north of Tarkhankutzki. F 580 was torpedoed and her cargo of 20 tons of ammunition exploded, causing her to sink immediately. Only 1 wounded man was rescued. F 579 outmaneuvered a second surface runner.

Three armed fishing vessels left Sevastopol at 1130 to carry out anti-submarine operations in Eupatoria Bay.

At 1800 submarine chasers Nos. 102 and 103 left Sevastopol to carry out anti-submarine operations west of Tarkhankutzki.

Commander, 30th Motor Minesweeper Flotilla received orders to transfer 4 motor minesweepers (RA) to Russe at once for a period in dock. The boats must arrive there before freezing starts.

After completion of compass repairs, E-boat S 49 left Sevastopol at 1145 for Ivan Baba. She arrived there at 1600. There are now 6 E-boats ready for operations at Ivan Baba. At 1800 4 naval ferry barges, which were put out of action in the Kerch operations, left Theodosia for Yalta for later transfer to Sevastopol (dockyard overhaul).

U-boat Situation:

U 20 arrived at Constantza at 1000 from her 13th enemy patrol (4th Black Sea operation).

Minesweeping Activity:

The FZ-group carried out a check sweep in the area suspected of mines off Tarkhankutzki. In 8 checks with towed loop gear, 1 standard mine was swept.

The report of minelaying, which was the reason for the check, was thus confirmed.

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Commander, 50th Motor Minesweeper Flotilla received orders to check the area east of the route between points Green 37 and Green 38 with towed loop gear, and to transfer 2 more FZ-boats to Ak Mechet for this purpose.

1st Air Corps was requested to give support with minesweeping planes. This they agreed to do.

Motor minesweepers (RA) carried out exploratory sweeps north of route Green off Eupatoria Bay. No mines were swept.

Supply Traffic:

Apart from the submarine attack on the Odessa-Ak Mechet convoy, convoys in the western Black Sea ran without incident.

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10 December, 1943

Simferopol

Enemy Situation:

The requested night reconnaissance of the Caucasus coast had to be canceled because of fog over the air base. Four planes operated on daylight reconnaissance over the entire Black Sea, but no enemy shipping was located.

In the morning a freighter was sighted, course west, off the Turkish coast, approximately 5 miles north of Ayanzik. A Turkish freighter of 3,000 tons was seen, course east, north of Bafra Burnu.

Main Naval D/F Station Reports:

Two M.T.B.s were located at noon off the southern part of the east coast. One submarine was located in an unidentified position, probably in the eastern Black Sea.

Moderate activity of small vessels in the evening. Two M.T.B.s were intercepted in the area off the northern part of the east coast and Kerch Strait and 3 minesweepers off the southern part of the east coast.

Submarines detected: 2 in the northwestern Black Sea to west and southwest of the Crimea. A third was only heard being called. It is thought that 3 more submarines must be in the operational area. The submarine intercepted at noon in the eastern Black Sea is still there.

Own Situation:

Weather forecast:

Variable winds, force 2 - 3, mainly overcast, local showers, visibility 6 - 10 miles, patches of fog during the night, sea 2.

Crimea and Kerch Strait:

- a. After coming under heavy fire from the batteries near Kolonka and those on Kossa Chushka and Kossa Tuszla at about 2300 on 9 December, the naval ferry barges had an engagement in the western part of Kerch Bay and Pavlovski channel with enemy landing craft which were attempting to get through to the Mitridat Hill beachhead.

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According to observations made from the shore, 9 enemy boats were sunk in this action by naval ferry barges and coastal batteries. A direct hit on naval ferry barge F 333 put the engine and a 7.5 cm. gun out of action. Casualties were suffered. All the naval ferry barges put in to Kamish Burun about 0530.

This operation was carried out under heavy fire from the shore batteries in Kerch Bay using artillery and multiple rocket-firing guns in an area seriously endangered by mine-fields, and was of the greatest importance in mopping up the beachhead. It was completely justified in the light of the success which was gained in cooperation with the coastal batteries.

The enemy did not succeed in landing reinforcements. Thus the way was made clear for the Army to go ahead and mop up the beachhead, which was a serious threat to the town of Kerch and the entire Kerch Peninsula.

Motor minesweepers sighted nothing in the southern part of Kerch Strait.

b. Land Situation:

Morning: Our own attack against the enemy group which broke through to Mitridat Hill continued to be successful after daybreak. The Mitridat heights are in our hands. The attempts to land reinforcements last night under cover of heavy shellfire were smashed by our own artillery and naval ferry barges.

A group of 300 to 400 partisans attacked the village of Suya on the Simferopol-Theodosia road during the night of 8/9 December. Rumanian troops mopped up the village and regained important road communications.

Evening: The entire Mitridat Hill including Hill 91.4 has been cleared of enemy forces. Our own attack against the southern part of Kerch commenced at 1400 after heavy preparatory fire and bombing with incendiaries and oil bombs. Nothing to report from the northern front or the Baksy beachhead.

c. Air Reconnaissance of Caucasus Ports:

On account of the lack of suitable planes in the Crimea, reconnaissance of Caucasus ports has been seriously neglected recently. The Crimean situation demands advance knowledge of enemy landing intentions, since only then

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will it be possible to detail naval forces in good time for suitable countermeasures. Knowledge of landing preparations depends however on continuous reconnaissance of all the Caucasus ports. As only 3 reconnaissance flights were made over the ports in the month of October and only 1 flight in November, there is at present no data available on the disposition of forces and activity of the Russian Navy and merchant fleet. The enemy is therefore in a position to make a sudden attack with strong forces on the Crimean coast.

Explaining this situation, I sent a renewed request to 4th Air Force:

- a. Reconnaissance of the Caucasus ports and coast at least every third day, if weather conditions permit.
- b. Transfer of those planes suitable for photographic reconnaissance from Odessa to the Crimea, as we consider Odessa to be an unfavorable base for reconnaissance of the Caucasus during the winter, as the few favorable days which occur in this season cannot be turned to good account owing to the prevalent fog.

Operations ordered for the night of 9/10 December:

Since the enemy forces have been still further encircled on Mitridat Hill and are about to be annihilated, they will either make another great effort to bring up reinforcements in the coming night or else try to evacuate the troops. As on the previous night, these attempts must be smashed at all costs. It is fully appreciated that the task of the naval ferry barges is a most difficult and nearly impossible one, considering their clumsy construction in relation to the narrow bay, the difficulties of navigation, and the concentrated fire from the enemy batteries at Kolonka, Kossa Chushka and Kossa Tuszla, which will probably be far stronger in the coming night.

Nevertheless, because of the urgency of wiping out the newly-formed bridgehead as soon as possible, this operation must be carried out regardless of the losses to be expected.

Commanders, 1st Landing Craft Flotilla and 3rd Motor Minesweeper Flotilla received the following orders:

- a. As soon as darkness sets in, 2 naval ferry barges will occupy the patrol line in Kerch Bay and 2 others the one off Kamish Burun.

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The boats will return to Kamish Burun at dawn.

- b. Three motor minesweepers will be stationed in the southern part of Kerch Strait, concentrating on Eltigen. The boats will leave Theodosia at 1430 and will commence return passage at 0400.

The flotilla commanders were especially advised of the significance and importance of the task.

The boats were in position in good time. At 2000 the naval ferry barges reported that they were being shelled off Pavlovski channel by enemy coastal batteries.

Western Black Sea:

Anti-submarine operations off Tarkhankutzki were carried out by 3 armed fishing vessels and 2 submarine chasers (naval transports). No mines were swept. One inertia contact mine was exploded by submarine chaser No. 103 approximately 17 miles west of Ak Mechet.

On the basis of the weather forecast, I believe that the long proposed offensive operation by 1st E-Boat Flotilla against enemy supply traffic off the Caucasus coast should be possible in the coming night. Since 1 November, the E-boats have had to remain on defensive operations in Kerch Strait, as the most important task at the time was the defense of the Crimean fortress. It is most necessary that our E-boats should make an appearance off the Caucasus coast to harass enemy traffic proceeding to the north-western Caucasus ports, unsettle the enemy in that area and tie down light enemy naval forces which would otherwise be available for offensive operations.

Commander, 1st E-Boat Flotilla received the following orders:

On the night of 10/11 December, 1st E-Boat Flotilla will carry out the operation (scheduled for the night of 5 December but canceled because of weather) against enemy shipping off Cape Utrich and Cape Idokopas. Operational orders as for 5 December with 2 groups of 3 boats each. The times remain unchanged.

1st Air Corps was requested to send the Lichtenstein reconnaissance plane to the area between Tuapse and Anapa from 1900 to 0200 to cooperate with the E-boats.

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U-boat Situation:

U 23 has been lying ready for operations at Constantza since 9 December waiting for a spare part for her hydrophone set from Germany. Arrival has been delayed because of bomb damage to the delivering firm.

Minesweeping Activity:

FZ-boats carried out a check sweep for standard mines off Tarkhankutzki. No mines were swept.

Supply Traffic:

Convoys in the western Black Sea and off the Crimean coast ran as scheduled without incident.

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11 December, 1943

Simferopol

Enemy Situation:

No enemy vessels were sighted during night reconnaissance of the area southeast of the Crimea and south of Kerch Strait.

Three planes flew daylight reconnaissance over the entire Black Sea; no enemy shipping was located. The following shipping was observed in Turkish territorial waters: 1 freighter of 1,500 tons, course west, 12 miles northwest of Ayanzik; 1 coastal vessel of 300 tons, course west, 10 miles northeast of Ayanzik; 1 Turkish passenger vessel of 4,000 tons, course east, off Bafra Burnu; 1 Turkish freighter of 3,000 tons, course east, approximately 20 miles west of Amasra; 1 Turkish freighter of 1,500 tons, course west, about 5 miles north of Amasra.

Main Naval D/F Station Reports:

During the day activity of small vessels off the east coast increased, continued until evening and slackened off during the night.

According to the noon report, 4 M.T.B.s, 2 motor gunboats and an unidentified small vessel were intercepted between the northern and central parts of the east coast and 2 minesweepers off the southern part. A submarine was intercepted off the central part of the east coast, course westnorthwest.

In the evening 3 more M.T.B.s and a submarine were intercepted in the submarine operational area off the southern part of the east coast. One gunboat and 1 M.T.B. were intercepted between the northern and central parts of the east coast.

Submarines detected: 3 in the northwestern Black Sea to west and southwest of the Crimea. Another submarine was heard being called. In addition to these, 2 more submarines were thought to be in the operational area. One submarine was located off the central part of the east coast to the central Black Sea and one in the eastern Black Sea. Thus a total of 8 submarines was intercepted.

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Own Situation:

Weather forecast:

NE - E winds, force 3 - 4, off the west coast up to force 5, cloudy, visibility after the fog clears 12 miles, sea 2 - 3.

Crimea and Kerch Strait:

- a. Last night from 1700 to 0530, 2 naval ferry barges were in patrol line off Kerch Bay and 2 off Kamish Burun. Throughout the night they were heavily shelled by enemy artillery and multiple rocket-firing guns. They also had several bombing attacks. The boats suffered only slight damage and no casualties. At about 0130 approximately, 20 landing craft and 4 motor gunboats were seen heading for Kolonka-Kerch and were shelled by the coastal batteries. It was not possible for our naval ferry barges to interfere as their guns would have been trained on our own coast.

Coastal defense guns sank 8 small and 4 large boats from the enemy formation. The remaining boats withdrew.

The motor minesweepers in the southern part of Kerch Strait sighted nothing. While homeward bound off Cape Chauda, 2 enemy fighters were fought off with 3.7 cm. guns. At 0910 bombs were dropped on Kamish Burun. A direct hit was scored on naval ferry barge F 559, causing serious damage.

b. Land Situation:

Morning: The Mitridat Hill beachhead is in our hands. 300 prisoners were taken. German and enemy patrol activity along the northern front. Nothing to report from the Baksy beachhead.

Evening: Nothing to report from the northern front or the Baksy beachhead.

After mopping up the newly-formed enemy beachhead in the southern part of Kerch Peninsula, I sent the following message to 17th Army H.Q.:

After the mopping-up of the Eltigen and southern Kerch beachheads, it was reported that the recaptured coast is once more firmly in our hands. I am therefore going to discontinue patrol duty by light naval forces during darkness. They have operated since 1 November, stopping enemy supplies in Kerch Strait.

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However, in order to show the enemy that German naval forces are still present in Kerch Strait and to deter them from attempting further landings after their experiences in the supplying and reinforcing of the Eltigen beachhead, motor minesweepers or E-boats will occasionally carry out night reconnaissance sweeps as far as Kamish Burun, using their armament in a demonstrative fashion where necessary.

Commander, 3rd Motor Minesweeper Flotilla received the following operational order for the coming night after being advised of the reasons for the occasional reconnaissance thrusts:

- a. Three motor minesweepers will occupy the patrol line between Chongelek and Kamish Burun on the night of 11/12 December.
- b. The boats will leave Theodosia at 1500 and will pass Takil homeward bound at 0300.
- c. If contact is made with the enemy, a report is to be sent immediately. No other German forces will be in Kerch Strait in the coming night. The boats left Theodosia at 1515 for the patrol line in Kerch Strait.

Western Black Sea:

During the forenoon Pervomeisk was heavily shelled from Kimburn. Naval gunnery lighter No. 4 was damaged by splinters in the port bow, is shipping water and is being kept afloat with the aid of pumps. Rumanian ground attack planes dropped bombs on Kimburn. The town of Ochakov was shelled between 1300 and 1400. Kimburn was later heavily shelled by the Germans and Rumanians. At 0930 submarine chasers Nos. 102 and 103 attacked an enemy submarine with depth charges off Tarkhankutzki in air grid square 2656. No result has been reported.

Three other submarine chasers (armed fishing vessels) were engaged on anti-submarine patrol in the waters off Eupatoria.

At 1115 submarine chaser No. 103 reported that a Ju 87 had crashed off Tarkhankutzki. At 1130 submarine chasers Nos. 102 and 103 put in to Ak Mechet to land the rescued crew and left again at 1500 for anti-submarine patrol. At 1650 submarine chaser No. 103 reported that the submarine operations carried out this morning 5 miles west of Tarkhankutzki must have been inspired by a faulty location or a mistaken reading of the search gear, as 50 depth charges were dropped without result.

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At 0455 4 naval ferry barges put in to Sevastopol from Yalta for repairs after operations in Kerch Strait. Four damaged naval ferry barges left Kamish Burun at 1600 for Theodosia.

The results of the operation carried out by 1st E-Boat Flotilla yesterday against enemy shipping were as follows:

- a. One group was in position off Cape Idokopas at 1720. Bright full moon, visibility about 8 miles. No traffic. Returned at 2230, NNW winds, force 5 - 6, sea 4.
- b. The other group was in position off Cape Utrich at 1825. No traffic was sighted in continuous good visibility. This operation was also broken off at 0100 as weather conditions became worse.

U-boat Situation:

The following radiogram was received from U 9, in the operational area:

"Will commence return passage on 13 December at the latest. Lubricating oil 400 liters, 9 cbm. fuel, 5 torpedoes, no traffic."

On account of a shortage of U-boats U 9 will have to stay a few days longer in the operational area. The boat therefore received orders to report the latest possible date of return, if she were to take in supplies and fuel at Theodosia.

Minesweeping Activity:

FZ-boats carried out a check sweep off Tarkhankutzki. No mines were swept.

Supply Traffic:

Convoy traffic was canceled today in the western Black Sea and along the south coast of the Crimea because of the weather.

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12 December, 1943

Simferopol

Enemy Situation:

No night reconnaissance because of the weather. No enemy vessels were sighted in the course of daylight reconnaissance over the central and eastern Black Sea.

Results of reconnaissance of the ports were as follows:

Taman (aerial photograph, partly obscured by cloud): 5 M.T.B.s and 6 pontoon ferries.

Gluchoi channel (aerial photograph, partly obscured by cloud): 1 large motor gunboat, 12 pontoon ferries and 10 boats.

Main Naval D/F Station Reports:

Four M.T.B.s were intercepted at noon off the northern part of the east coast to Kerch Strait and 1 motor gunboat in the Sea of Azov.

A submarine was intercepted in an unidentified position in the central or eastern Black Sea. Slight activity of small vessels continued in the evening and during the night. Another M.T.B. was intercepted between the central and the northern parts of the east coast and 2 motor gunboats were detected off the northern part.

In the northwestern Black Sea as far as west and southwest of the Crimea, an unidentified submarine and submarine "W" were only heard being called. Four more submarines are still thought to be in the operational area. One submarine is in the northeastern Black Sea, most probably off Kerch Peninsula.

As far as can be judged at present, submarine "W" was destroyed in the anti-submarine operations carried out on 4 December by submarine chaser No. 103. She was located for the last time on 30 November in air grid square 3675, and has only been heard being called twice since.

According to an agent's report, an enemy force consisting of 1 cruiser, 2 destroyers, 2 tankers, 17 M.T.B.s and 4 submarines left Batum on 6 December steering north. 4th Air Force was therefore requested to make a photographic reconnaissance of the port of Tuapse immediately.

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Own Situation:

Weather forecast:

West coast Crimea: E - NE winds, force 4 - 5, sea 3.
South coast Crimea: NE winds, force 3, sea 2.
Kerch Strait: NE - E winds, force 4, sea 2 - 3.
General forecast: Cloudy, visibility 12 miles.

Crimea and Kerch Strait:

- a. On the night of 11/12 December, nothing was sighted by the 3 motor minesweepers in Kerch Strait which were stationed in patrol line between Chongelek and Kamish Burun. They put in to Theodosia at 0500.

9th Battery, Naval Gunnery Detachment 613 shelled the enemy batteries on Cape Panaghia.

b. Land Situation:

Morning: In annihilating the enemy group which broke through to the southern part of Kerch, 400 prisoners were taken, including 36 officers. All was quiet on the northern front and the Baksy front.

Evening: The number of prisoners taken at the Eltigen and Kerch beachheads amounts to 2,827. Captured were: 36 anti-tank guns, 19 heavy machine-guns, 69 light machine-guns, 41 mortars, 10 anti-tank rifles and 789 revolvers. 38 tanks, 25 anti-tank guns, 17 infantry guns, 31 mortars and 2 anti-aircraft guns were destroyed. Our own losses in killed and wounded in the two beachheads amounted to:

- 1,203 German officers, non-commissioned officers and men,
- 952 Rumanian officers, non-commissioned officers and men.

On the northern front lively traffic continued on the dams across the Sivash.

Operations ordered for the night of 12/13 December:

Commander, 1st Landing Craft Flotilla and Commander, Naval Gunnery Detachment 613 received the following operational orders:

After mopping up the two beachheads in Kerch Strait, it will be necessary to send out occasional patrols at night.

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The object of such patrol lines is as follows: The mopping-up of the enemy beachheads at Eltigen and south Kerch was only possible because reinforcements and material were prevented from reaching them. The enemy knows this. By occasional night operations of naval ferry barges, motor minesweepers and E-boats, the enemy must be made to believe that our own coast is still guarded by naval forces and that they would suffer the same defeat if they were to attempt similar landing operations.

Order:

- a. Three naval ferry barges will leave Kamish Burun at 1800 and will stand on and off in patrol line between Chongolek and Kamish Burun until 0200. They will then return to Kamish Burun. Formation line ahead, distance between the boats at least 400 meters so that they do not present a closed target to the enemy coastal batteries.

Task: To attack enemy forces and prevent landings. If the enemy is sighted send a message immediately.

- b. Naval Gunnery Detachment 613 will hold off enemy coastal batteries by shelling them at once, should they fire on the naval ferry barges.
- c. No other naval forces will be operating in Kerch Strait during the night of 12/13 December.

Western Black Sea:

It was pointed out to Army Group A that according to available reports, the shipping placed at their disposal by the Navy had not been fully utilized in the period from 1 to 10 December. According to a report from Commander, Sea Transportation, Black Sea, this was due to an inadequate supply of goods arriving in the ports.

Army Group A was urgently requested to ensure that sufficient supplies of goods would be on the spot in future. Naval Group South, 17th Army H.Q., Commander, Sea Transportation, Black Sea and Commander, Convoys and Escorts, Black Sea were also informed.

The recently increasing losses in shipping as a result of submarine attacks make it necessary for me to define once again, for the benefit of Commander, Convoys and Escorts, Black Sea and all other formations in the Black Sea area, how vessels should proceed in endangered areas.

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1. At 1000 on 9 December, a submarine attacked 4 naval ferry barges with a fan-of-two torpedoes (surface runners) off Tarkhankutski. One hit was scored on F 580, the second torpedo passed 2 meters astern of F 579 as she out-maneuvered it. The naval ferry barges were sailing in close formation without zig-zagging.

2. Lesson:

In submarine operational areas spread out by day and on bright nights, but maintain a favorable formation (e.g. hedgehog formation).

A close formation offers a good target to a fan of torpedoes and may lead to ramming if avoiding action has to be taken.

Distance between boats at least 400 meters. In addition to this, vigorous and irregular alterations of course should be made (up to 25°). The loss of time must be accepted.

3. Attention is drawn to the following:

- a. The importance of the look-out. (The look-out aboard F 579 saw the torpedo fired and thus the boat was able to avoid it. Presumably the tracks of the torpedo were not seen by F 580.)
- b. The need for energetic and correct avoiding action.
- c. The possibility of firing at surface runners with machine-guns.

Submarine chasers Nos. 102 and 103 put in to Sevastopol at 0200 from anti-submarine patrol.

South coast Crimea: 4 damaged naval ferry barges entered Theodosia at 0130 from Kamish Burun.

U-boat Situation:

In spite of the four days' delay in the departure of U 23, caused by the non-appearance of the multi-unit hydrophone compensator, it was decided that the boat should still not be ordered to put out without this listening device.

U 9 is to close this operational gap by staying longer in position and refueling at Theodosia. In reply to a request, she answered that she could stay in the operational area until 16 December and that she would take on fuel in Theodosia on 17 December.

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The following boats are due to be at readiness:

U 19 on 22 December, U 20 on 28 December, U 24 on 4 January, 1944 (after thorough overhaul at Galatz), U 18 approximately 25 January, 1944 in Galatz (after thorough overhaul and repair of damage caused by depth charges).

Minesweeping Activity:

Minesweeping had to be canceled because of the weather.

Supply Traffic:

Convoys were again postponed in the western Black Sea because of the weather.

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13 December, 1943

Simferopol

Enemy Situation:

Night reconnaissance was again canceled because of the weather. Reconnaissance was flown during the day over the central and eastern Black Sea but no enemy vessels were sighted.

A Turkish freighter of 4,000 tons, course west, was sighted approximately 12 miles northeast of Bafra Burnu, and a steamer of 5,000 tons, course southeast, 6 miles north of Bafra Burnu.

Main Naval D/F Station Reports:

At noon 1 M.T.B. and 1 motor gunboat were intercepted between the northern and central parts of the east coast and 2 M.T.B.s and a minesweeper off the southern part. According to the evening report, activity of small vessels was generally slight. Two further M.T.B.s were intercepted in the evening between the northern and central parts of the east coast and a minesweeper off the southern part.

Submarines detected: 2 in the northwestern Black Sea to southwest of the Crimea. The submarine intercepted yesterday off Kerch Peninsula was approximately 55 miles southwest of Sevastopol in the evening. Three further submarines are thought to be in the operational area. One submarine was intercepted in an unidentified position, probably at sea in the operational area.

Own Situation:

Weather forecast:

NE winds, force 4, cloudy, visibility 15 miles, sea 2 - 3.

Crimea and Kerch Strait:

a. Last night 3 naval ferry barges were stationed in patrol line in Kerch Strait between Chongelok and Kamish Burun. Nothing to report.

b. Land Situation:

Morning: No fighting took place during the night of 12/13 December. So far enemy losses on Mitridat Hill and in the southern part of Kerch have amounted to 1,110 killed, 819 taken prisoner. 720 revolvers, 60 machine-guns,

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37 mortars and 13 anti-tank rifles were captured. Judging by the casualties and the number of prisoners taken, the newly-formed Kerch beachhead was much larger than was at first expected. It is possible that it was strengthened by partisans.

Evening: No fighting on the northern front apart from slight shelling by both sides.

Slight shelling and air activity in the Baksy beachhead.

No operations are planned for the coming night in Kerch Strait, but 3 naval ferry barges will be at an hour's readiness at Kamish Burun from 1700 until daybreak, in case of emergency.

Western Black Sea:

Naval Group South reported that in response to the request from 4th Air Force the Rumanians have again placed fighter escort at the disposal of our convoys. Group also reported that, owing to the more critical situation at Army Group South, no extra fighters could be spared for convoy protection from our own resources.

At our request, 1st Air Corps has received standing orders to attack the air base at Skadovsk, which is used as a base for bomber and torpedo planes operating against our convoys. No attacks have been possible in the last few days because of the weather. Attacks will only be made during the night because of the strong enemy fighter defenses.

4th Air Force reported that, in compliance with our request, the Caucasus ports will in future be reconnoitered every second day, weather permitting. Our suggestion that the planes in question should be transferred from Odessa to the Crimea is not practicable on account of supply difficulties.

According to a report from Naval Port Commander, Nikolaiev, 4 Rumanian bombers attacked Kimburn during the forenoon and enemy artillery shelled the town and port of Ochakov. German mortars shelled Kimburn in the afternoon. The enemy again shelled the town and port of Ochakov. Slight damage to buildings. No military damage or casualties.

According to the experiences of the last few days, it is presumed that the main operational area of enemy submarines is still the Tarkhankutzki-Eupatoria Bay area. In the present easterly

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gales it is to be expected that the boats would prefer the more protected Eupatoria Bay. They must be systematically hunted and destroyed in order to prevent further losses of ships, which are irreplaceable for supplying the Crimea.

Commander, 1st Submarine Chaser Flotilla was informed of this and received the following orders: Submarine chasers Nos. 101 and 102 to leave Sevastopol at 1400 on 13 December on anti-submarine patrol in air grid squares 2660, 2680 and 3670. They will not return until ordered to do so by Admiral, Black Sea. Breakdowns, casualties etc. will be reported by Most Immediate signal. Wait for the order to return.

Commander, Convoys and Escorts, Crimean Coast received instructions to inform the convoys about the activity of the submarine chasers and the submarine chasers of convoys due to pass.

The boats left Sevastopol at 1510 for anti-submarine patrol in the prescribed area.

On the afternoon of 12 December, No. 1 hatch of steamer "Lola" caught fire while lying in Sevastopol. The fire was extinguished by flooding the hold. No important damage was done. The cause was not discovered, probably careless smoking.

At 2040 5 motor minesweepers left Theodosia for Sevastopol for minesweeping operations. Commander, 3rd Motor Minesweeper Flotilla received orders to fit the boats out at once for minesweeping duties on reaching Sevastopol. Minesweeping orders to follow.

U-boat Situation:

In order to avoid further delay in the departure of U 23 through the non-arrival of the compensator for the multi-unit hydrophone, the U-boat base received orders to install the compensator from U 20. The boat will then at least be able to receive sound transmissions. Noise locations (determination of direction) will not be possible as the compensator and the brush-plate are tuned for operation aboard U 20.

U 9 received permission to attack all vessels in the operational Novorossisk-Tuapse area, concentrating in the area north and south of Tuapse, and orders to return to Theodosia on 16 December to refuel.

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Minesweeping Activity:

FZ 5 and FZ 8 carried out a check sweep for standard mines west of Tarkhankutzki. No mines were swept.

Two FZ-boats carried out check sweeps for moored mines off Ak Mechet harbor entrance. Report has not yet been received.

One standard mine was swept by a minesweeping plane approximately 150 meters west of the lighthouse on Tarkhankutzki.

In contrast to other checks requested up to now, 1st Air Force was requested to have the area up to the 25-meter line checked by minesweeping planes.

Supply Traffic:

Convoys were again postponed because of the weather.

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14 December, 1943

Simferopol

Enemy Situation:

Nothing was sighted by night reconnaissance except our own vessels. Reconnaissance flown during the day over the central and eastern Black Sea sighted no enemy vessels. A Turkish freighter of 4,000 tons was seen on a north-westerly course off the Turkish coast, 8 miles northeast of Ayanzik.

Main Naval D/F Station Reports:

One M.T.B. was intercepted at noon between the northern and central parts of the east coast and 2 motor launches were detected in the Sea of Azov.

Only very slight activity of small vessels in the evening off the east coast. Two minesweepers and 1 M.T.B. were located off the southern part.

According to a radio intercept report, the convoy proceeding from Constantza to Sevastopol was located at 1720 by a submarine 55 miles southeast of St. George which passed this information to all submarines in the operational area.

Submarines detected: 2 in the northwestern Black Sea to west and southwest of the Crimea, one of which was approaching from an easterly direction. Four more submarines were thought to be in the operational area. One submarine, homeward bound, was located in the afternoon approximately 60 miles south of Yalta.

Submarine "W", which had been regarded as lost since 4 December, was again called in radio traffic. Today different stations tried to reach her with the same radiogram which had already been sent on the previous days. Her destruction, which was believed likely after the combat report, is now assumed to be confirmed on the basis of the radio monitoring reports.

Own Situation:

Weather forecast:

Light winds, mainly N, generally overcast, visibility 12 miles, sea 2.

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Crimea and Kerch Strait:

- a. No activity in Kerch Strait. The 3 naval ferry barges which were at one hour's readiness in Kamish Burun last night had nothing to report.

The port and harbor areas of Kamish Burun were shelled during the day. No damage or casualties.

The danger to naval ferry barges at Kamish Burun in air raids and during shelling is not now so great, as the remaining 3 vessels can be berthed at greater distances apart.

b. Land Situation:

Increasing artillery and air activity and lively enemy movements on the Perekop front. Otherwise nothing to report.

Operations ordered for the night of 14/15 December:

Commanders, 1st Landing Craft Flotilla and Naval Gunnery Detachment 613 received the following orders:

- a. In the coming night 3 naval ferry barges will repeat the reconnaissance thrust in Kerch Strait between Chongelok and Kamish Burun, leaving Kamish Burun at 1600 and commencing return passage at midnight.

Task: To prevent enemy landings. If contact is made with the enemy, a Most Immediate signal should be sent immediately.

- b. If the naval ferry barges are shelled by enemy coastal batteries, Naval Gunnery Detachment 613 will assist the boats by paralyzing the enemy batteries.

The naval ferry barges left Kamish Burun at 1550 to take up their prescribed positions.

Western Black Sea:

In ASM Gkdos. 8229 A I dated 13 December, it was suggested to Group South that a Coastal Defense Flotilla, Black Sea should be formed. It is felt here that a change in the organization is necessary because of the increasing convoy and escort tasks in the Black Sea, the shifting of the main body of sea transport to the western Black Sea and the need to cooperate with Rumanian naval forces, giving them full confidence, yet making allowances for the Rumanian mentality.

As no reply has yet been received from Army Group A regarding a possible re-occupation of Kimburn Peninsula, a fresh inquiry was sent asking if and when such an operation could be expected.

Some statement is required, so that arrangements can be made for the necessary movement of transports before the river Bug and the Dnieper estuary freeze.

According to a report from Naval Port Commander, Nikolaiev, enemy fighters attacked lighters lying in Ochakov roads and harbor at 0750. Slight damage. Enemy artillery shelled the town and harbor of Ochakov. Rumanian fighters attacked Kimburn. No losses. Anti-submarine operations were carried out in the Eupatoria-Tarkhankutzki area by submarine chasers Nos. 101 and 102, and south of Cape Sarich by "Rosita". Nothing to report.

Up to now, nearly all our Constantza-Sevastopol steamer convoys have had to take the route through Eupatoria Bay, as the direct southern route through the Russian danger area was blocked. Enemy submarines have therefore concentrated in the Tarkhankutzki-Eupatoria area and forced us to route all our convoys via SS 1 and Cape Sarich. It will therefore be necessary to make an approach route direct to Sevastopol from the southwest.

Commander, 3rd Motor Minesweeper Flotilla therefore received the following orders:

- a. The area between the connecting lines
44° 36.5' N, 33° 18.5' E,
44° 31.0' N, 33° 21.5' E,
44° 24.0' N, 33° 15.5' E
and 44° 30.0' N, 33° 10.0' E
should be swept up to the 150-meter line with oropesa gear, 15-meter pendant, while the area outside the 150-meter line should be checked.
- b. This operation should be carried out by 5 boats of the Crimea group.
- c. Commence operations on 15 December and, if weather permits, daily from sunrise to sunset.
- d. Report daily after entering port the stage of work reached and the day's events.

Commander, 1st E-Boat Flotilla received orders to repeat the operation against enemy traffic off Cape Utrich and Cape Idokopas with two groups of 3 boats on the night of 14/15 December in

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accordance with previous orders.

1st E-Boat Flotilla has been informed that one of our U-boats is off the northern entrance to Tuapse and that the E-boats should not cross south of the latitude 44° 15' N. Anti-submarine activity is permitted north of 44° 15' N.

1st Air Corps was asked to detail night fighters for the operation. The boats left at 1430.

U-boat Situation:

At 2200 on 14 December, the U-boat base reported U 23 ready to sail. (Temporary hydrophones were installed without D/F gear.)

U 9 was ordered to be off Theodosia at 0600 on 16 December to refuel. Both boats are to leave Tuapse on 17 December for joint operations in the south. U 23 left Constantza at 2200 according to plan with the normal equipment. Boat proceeding via northern route.

Minesweeping Activity:

Minesweeping was carried out off Tarkhankutzki by minesweeping planes, while FZ-boats made a check for standard mines in the same area. No mines were swept.

Supply Traffic:

At 1440 4 planes attacked the "Kassa", "Bachus" and "Ossag" convoy on passage from Constantza to Sevastopol. No damage. One plane was brought down.

Convoy traffic was resumed in the western Black Sea and off the south coast of the Crimea when the weather improved. Nothing to report.

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15 December, 1943

Simferopol

Enemy Situation:

No enemy vessels were sighted by night reconnaissance off the Caucasus coast or in Crimean inshore waters. Daylight reconnaissance was flown over the central and eastern Black Sea and over the southern part of the Sea of Azov. No enemy vessels were sighted.

At 0853 an enemy reconnaissance plane, on which a bearing of 174° was taken by Main Naval D/F Station, located the "Kassa", "Ossag" and "Bachus" convoy which was proceeding from Constantza to Sevastopol, and transmitted its position to ground bases and to torpedo planes which had already taken off.

Main Naval D/F Station Reports:

Two M.T.B.s were intercepted off the southern part of the east coast, as well as another M.T.B. and several unidentified small vessels in unknown positions. In the evening no activity of large surface forces was intercepted, with the exception of 2 minesweepers in the eastern and an M.T.B. in the northeastern Black Sea.

Submarines detected: 2 in the northwestern Black Sea. Another submarine was located in an area approximately 35 miles west to southwest of Sevastopol. Three further submarines are thought to be in the operational area.

Own Situation:

Weather forecast:

NW - N winds, force 4 - 5, temporarily 6, mainly overcast, snow and rain showers, visibility 4 - 6 miles, sea 3 - 4.

Crimea and Kerch Strait:

- a. Nothing was sighted by the naval ferry barges in patrol line in Kerch Strait during the night of 14/15 December with the exception of lively searchlight activity from Kolonka and Tuszla. The naval ferry barges which ran aground at the northern point of Kossa Tuszla were fired on by Russian artillery.

A heavy explosion occurred with a bright darting flame and subsequent clouds of smoke.

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b. Land Situation:

Morning: Nothing to report.

Evening: Lively exchanges of gunfire along the main defense line, mainly concentrated on the Perckop front. Lively ferry traffic in the Sivash. Only slight exchanges of gunfire at the Baksy beachhead.

- c. For report of ammunition used by the naval formations participating in the battle for the Eltigen beachhead during the period 29 October to 7 December 1943, see Appendix.

No operations were planned in Kerch Strait for the night of 15/16 December, but Commander, 1st Landing Craft Flotilla received orders to have 3 naval ferry barges at 1 hour's readiness in Kamish Burun from 1700 to 0300. Orders as for the night of 13/14 December.

Western Black Sea:

According to a Rumanian report, the island of Fidonisi was shelled at 0430 by 2 unidentified planes. No further details are known. Nothing was sighted in the Black Sea by air reconnaissance on 14 and 15 December. Radio monitoring did not detect any large vessels at sea. Reconnaissance Commander, West ordered reconnaissance of the Constantza-Sevastopol area.

The strong enemy air activity over the north-western Black Sea forces us to send the towed convoys out between Odessa and Sevastopol only during darkness. Convoys will therefore put in to Ak Mechet during the day as an intermediate port. As Ak Mechet is frequently used as a port of refuge during the winter months, an increasing number of boats must be reckoned with in the bay. The bay offers no natural protection to ships at anchor against torpedo attacks from submarines to seaward. It is therefore necessary to protect these anchorages in the bay with anti-torpedo nets.

Net Barrage Flotilla, Black Sea received the following orders:

1. To lay a net barrage in the bay of Ak Mechet as soon as possible. The nets intended for Eupatoria should be used for this purpose. Report to Sevastopol when ready to load. A naval ferry barge will be provided for transportation.
2. After completion of the task at Ak Mechet, a net barrage should be laid at Eupatoria.

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At 2010 on 14 December, harbor defense boat RS 05 sank in heavy seas 20 miles northwest of Ak Mechet. One man is missing.

Submarine chasers Nos. 101 and 102 carried out anti-submarine operations in Eupatoria Bay. At 0156 a heavy explosion occurred as a depth charge was dropped by submarine chaser No. 102. There was a steady, bright blaze of oil on the surface of the water and the submarine chaser disappeared. Submarine chaser No. 101 was at the place where the explosion occurred at 0555 and reported a great deal of wreckage there. The cause of the loss of the submarine chaser is not known.

The accident might possibly have been caused by:

- a. Explosion of the ammunition cargo and fire in the gasoline cargo in the wreck "Santa Fe", on which the depth charge might by chance have dropped. A burning patch of oil lasting 3 hours refutes this conclusion, as "Santa Fe" had only a part-cargo of gasoline in drums on board, which would not have caused a fire lasting as long as this.
- b. A hit on an enemy submarine, causing ammunition and torpedoes on board the submarine to explode. The drifting oil might have caught fire through the explosion.

In both cases, submarine chaser No. 102 would have sprung a leak and sunk at once as a result of the heavy explosion at such short range. No survivors were picked up. The burning oil could not have come from her as she had no oil on board. Therefore it is not likely that a torpedo or mine was the cause.

Commander, Convoys and Escorts, Black Sea received orders to place submarine chaser No. 106 at the disposal of Admiral, Black Sea for anti-submarine duty off Tarkhankutzki until 22 December to compensate for the total loss of submarine chaser No. 102.

Submarine chaser No. 103 is out of action for the time being and No. 101 is the only submarine chaser at present operational.

The Crimea group of 3rd Motor Minesweeper Flotilla reported a suspected submarine 12 miles north of Sevastopol at 0920. A depth charge attack was made with no visible success. They were ordered to keep in contact with the submarine until submarine chaser No. 101 arrived to take over.

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At 1630 submarine chaser No. 101 reported that her search gear and revolving directional hydrophones were out of action. She was ordered to attempt to repair the location gear on board and then, when submarine chaser No. 106 arrived, to proceed with her on anti-submarine patrol in the prescribed area.

Last night's operation by 1st E-Boat Flotilla against enemy shipping off the Caucasus coast had the following results:

- a. The first group sighted nothing off the coast near Idokopas between 1945 and 2230. It was a bright night. Return passage was started at 2230, as the center engine of one of the boats broke down. The boats arrived at Ivan Baba at 0430.
- b. The second group was in lurking position off Cape Utrich from 1830 to 0300. No traffic was sighted. The group put in to Ivan Baba at 0545.

U-boat Situation:

U 23 outward bound according to plan via the northern route. U 9 reported estimated time of arrival at Theodosia to take on fuel as 0600 on 16 December. The coast and the authorities concerned were informed.

Minesweeping Activity:

The Crimea group of 3rd Motor Minesweeper Flotilla was engaged on minesweeping operations in Eupatoria Bay from 0900 to 1600. No mines were swept.

Supply Traffic:

Convoys in the western Black Sea and off the west coast of the Crimea ran as scheduled without incident.

(Signed) Brinkmann.

APPENDIX I

Ammunition used by naval forces participating in the battle for the Eltigen beachhead in the period 29 October to 7 December, 1943:

a. 3rd Motor Minesweeper Flotilla:

13,000 rounds 3.7 cm. ammunition
34,000 rounds 2.0 cm. ammunition
15,200 rounds 7.9 cm. ammunition
140 rounds 8.6 cm. ammunition rocket shells (wire-filled)
123 rounds 8.6 cm. ammunition rocket high-explosive shells
64 rounds 8.6 cm. ammunition rocket starshells;

b. Boats of 1st and 3rd Landing Craft Flotillas:

3,500 rounds 7.5 cm. ammunition
105,000 rounds 2.0 cm. ammunition.

c. Naval Gunnery Detachment 613:

1st Battery: 1,600 rounds 15 cm. ammunition
3,680 rounds 2 cm. ammunition.

2nd Battery: 2,000 rounds 17 cm. ammunition
14,800 rounds 2 cm. ammunition.

3rd Battery: 2,400 rounds 13 cm. ammunition
20,600 rounds 2 cm. ammunition.

4th Battery: 2,470 rounds 7.62 cm. ammunition
4,450 rounds 2.0 cm. ammunition.

7th Battery: 1,075 rounds 7.62 cm. ammunition
40,320 rounds 2.0 cm. ammunition.

9th Battery: 1,650 rounds 12.2 cm. ammunition
3,260 rounds 2.0 cm. ammunition.

10th Battery: 278 rounds 7.62 cm. ammunition
6,200 rounds 2.0 cm. ammunition.

d. Total:

Medium guns 6,000 rounds
Light guns 8,973 rounds
Medium anti-aircraft guns 13,000 rounds
Light anti-aircraft guns 157,000 rounds
Small arms (approximately) 150,000 rounds.

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16 December, 1943

Simferopol

Enemy Situation:

Nothing to report from night reconnaissance over the northeastern Black Sea.

Increased daylight reconnaissance over the central part of the western Black Sea. No enemy forces sighted. Reconnaissance was also flown over the central and eastern Black Sea but again no enemy ships were sighted.

Two small coastal vessels were detected off Ghelenjik, course southeast.

One Turkish freighter of 3,000 tons was detected close to the Turkish coast off Baфра Burnu, course northwest.

Main Naval D/F Station Reports:

In the afternoon 1 motor gunboat and 1 M.T.B. were detected in the east coast area. Only slight activity of small vessels off the east coast in the evening and at night. During the evening, 3 minesweepers and 1 M.T.B. were detected off the southern part of the east coast and 1 M.T.B. off the northern part.

No bearings could be taken on submarines because of dummy radio procedure. There are 4 submarines for certain, and probably 2 more, in the northwestern Black Sea. The submarine which was attacked and possibly destroyed by submarine chaser No. 102 on the morning of 15 December was probably "G" or "P", but "E", "F" and "U" are further possibilities.

A reconnaissance plane detected by the radio intercept service over the Ak Mechet area at 0830 reported 1 tanker, 1 transport, 2 patrol vessels and 2 Mo 109. The plane probably observed naval transports Nos. 101 and 106 and the two FZ-boats which are on anti-submarine operations in this area.

Own Situation:

Weather forecast:

W - NW winds, force 4 - 5, mainly overcast, light showers, visibility 6 - 8 miles, sea 2 - 3.

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Crimea and Kerch Strait:

- a. On 15 December, Kamish Burun was shelled several times. Minor splinter damage to naval ferry barges.

Lively enemy ferry traffic from Chushka to Yenikale.

- b. In the forenoon, 7th Battery, Naval Gunnery Detachment 613 sank an enemy M.T.B. which was attempting to penetrate to Kamish Burun harbor. During an air raid on the port of Kamish Burun and 7th Battery, this battery shot down one IL 2 plane.

c. Land Situation:

Morning: On the northern front enemy forces made repeated attacks near Hill 17.6 north of Tarkhan, but were repulsed in hard hand-to-hand fighting. The main defense line is still in our hands.

Nothing to report from the Baksy beachhead.

Evening: Enemy harassing fire increasing northeast of Kerch. Ground attack planes raided Kamish Burun.

All quiet on the northern front. During the night of 15/16 December, the bridge across the Sivash was damaged by bombs in 2 places. The enemy is working on repairs.

- d. In reply to an inquiry from 4th Air Force concerning proposals for cutting off supplies to the Baksy bridgehead, Admiral, Black Sea reported that most of this supply traffic proceeded via Kossa Chushka. Only the Air Force could interfere, as it is impossible for our naval forces to operate in the northern part of Kerch Strait, which is only 4,000 - 5,000 meters wide and is strongly defended by gun batteries on both sides. Moreover, the traffic is not within range of our shore batteries.

The following proposal was made to 4th Air Force with a view to disrupting the supply traffic:

- a. Minelaying by planes in the northern part of Kerch Strait. Attention is drawn to the detailed proposals already submitted in ASM Gkdos. 7409 A I on 10 November, 1943.
- b. Enemy loading places at Kossa Chushka, Taman and Sonaya and ships lying at these places

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and at sea should be bombed and machine-gunned continuously. On Kossa Chushka, e.g. near Ilich, large new landing stages have been constructed, and coastal vessels of up to 700 tons have been detected alongside them.

Operations for the night of 16/17 December:

1st Landing Craft Flotilla was ordered to send 3 naval ferry barges from Kamish Burun to patrol in Kerch Strait between Chongelek and Kamish Burun from 1700 to 2400 today. Operational orders as for previous night.

Western Black Sea:

Investigations concerning the bombardment of the island of Fidonisi revealed that it was not shelled from the sea but that the island forces opened fire on 2 unidentified boats which appeared out of the fog at a range of about 500 meters. They were probably enemy submarines.

At 0245 2 naval ferry barges carrying parts of a railroad gun from Sevastopol to Odessa put in to Ak Mechet because of the weather.

On entering the harbor, naval ferry barge F 579 touched bottom and sprang a leak forward. She was only able to proceed with the help of a tug.

Submarine chasers Nos. 101 and 106 were on anti-submarine patrol in Eupatoria Bay. No results. No. 101 reported that her coal stocks would be exhausted by 2400 on 17 December.

In view of the need for continuous, intensified anti-submarine patrols in the Tarkhankutzki area, Commander, Convoys and Escorts, Black Sea was ordered to detach at least 3 and, if possible, 4 boats from 3rd or 23rd Submarine Chaser Flotilla to form a submarine chaser force to be transferred to Sevastopol. This force, like the force already formed from 1st Submarine Chaser Flotilla (naval transports), will be directly under the command of Admiral, Black Sea for operations.

At 1600 the damaged naval ferry barges F 137, F 333 and F 447 sailed from Theodosia via Yalta to Sevastopol for repairs.

U-boat Situation:

At 0630 U 9 entered Theodosia to refuel. Summary of her report: No traffic in the operational area south of Tuapse, where only 1 motor gunboat and a periscope were sighted in 14 days.

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Air patrol was slight.

At 1700 U 9 sailed again as scheduled for a brief operation of about 6 days. The duration of the operation is restricted because U 9 is using up a large quantity of lubricating oil as a result of defects in the Diesel engine.

Changes in operations: For the past 3 weeks no supply traffic has been detected in the area between Pitsunda and Tuapse by U-boats, air reconnaissance or Main Naval D/F Station. The weather has certainly been bad and shipping has probably been stopped for the time being. The slight enemy air reconnaissance indicates that the Russians have little interest in this area at present. Therefore from 17 December, U 9 and U 23 will proceed southeast to new attack areas off Poti and Batum to intercept possible local traffic and convoys when they start up again.

Minesweeping Activity:

FZ-boats operated in the Tarkhankutzki area. No mines swept.

Five motor minesweepers of 3rd Motor Minesweeper Flotilla began sweeping the southwestern minefield gap. In 3 sweeps, no mines were found.

No minesweeping planes operated because of the weather.

Supply Traffic:

Convoys in the northwestern Black Sea and off the west and south coasts of the Crimea ran as scheduled without enemy interference.

From 1 - 15 December, Crimea convoys carried 18,412 tons of supplies. That is approximately 6,600 tons less than was requested by Army Group A for this period. Failure to reach the target figure can be ascribed to the following factors:

1. Insufficient stream of supplies for loading, so that the tonnage made available could not be used to the full.
2. The unusually bad weather which caused serious delays.

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17 December, 1943

Simferopol

Enemy Situation:

Last night reconnaissance had to be abandoned early because of icing up. No enemy ships were sighted. No enemy shipping was observed in the course of daylight reconnaissance over the entire Black Sea. There was no reconnaissance over the Caucasus coast because of the weather.

In the Sea of Azov, reconnaissance was made of the ports of Skadovsk and Genichesk. There appeared to be 3 boats in Skadovsk and there were 15 boats in Genichesk.

Main Naval D/F Station, Eupatoria reported slight activity of small vessels generally.

At noon 1 destroyer sailed from the northern part of the east coast, presumably heading southeast. One minesweeper and 1 M.T.B. were detected off the southern part.

In the submarine operational area, no bearings could be taken because enemy radio traffic was carried on only under collective callsigns in dummy procedure. Individual calls were avoided. Six submarines are thought to be in the operational area.

Own Situation:

Weather forecast:

NE winds, force 4, squally up to force 6, cloudy, snow showers, visibility 15 miles, sea 3 - 4. Towards evening N - NW winds, force 4 - 3, at night NW, force 4, increasing cloud, visibility 10 miles, sea 3 - 2.

Crimoa and Kerch Strait:

a. Last night the naval ferry barges in reconnaissance line in Kerch Strait between Chongelek and Kamish Burun sighted nothing from 1700 to 2400.

b. Land Situation:

Morning: Two enemy attacks in the strength of 1 or 2 companies were repulsed on the Sivash front.

Nothing to report from the Baksy beachhead.

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Evening: In the infiltration at Perekop, an enemy assault detachment was repulsed in close combat.

The bridge across the Sivash near Russki was damaged in two places by bombing.

Lively shelling at the Baksy beachhead.

In the coming night there will be no naval ferry barge operations in Kerch Strait.

1st Landing Craft Flotilla was ordered to keep 3 naval ferry barges at 1 hour's readiness in Kamish Burun from 1600 to 0400.

Western Black Sea:

Nothing to report from the Kherson area except lively machine-gunning and rifle and artillery fire.

This morning tug "Kreuzenstein" ran aground west of Kimburn point. After refloating herself, she anchored about 2 - 3 miles south of Ochakov, where she was shelled from Kimburn. The enemy battery on Kimburn was later silenced by one of our own batteries.

Arrangements have been made to tow the tug to Ochakov during the night of 17/18 December. The rudder is probably damaged.

The boat which sank on 14 December about 20 miles northwest of Ak Mechet was not harbor defense vessel RS 05 but a captured Russian boat which was to be allocated to 51st Escort Flotilla after repairs.

Submarine chasers Nos. 101 and 102 obtained no locations while on patrol in Eupatoria Bay.

At 0825 No. 101 was attacked by a plane in Eupatoria Bay, but the plane was driven off by the ship's anti-aircraft fire. Both vessels put in to Sevastopol at 1400 as their coal stocks were exhausted. Depth charges were dropped on the submarine which was detected in air grid square 3516 at 0030 on 16 December. No results were observed.

South Coast Crimea:

At 0130 naval ferry barges F 137, F 333 and F 447, which were damaged in the Kerch operations, put in to Yalta with tug "Kehl" and 1 water lighter on passage from Theodosia. They will take in cargo and proceed to Sevastopol for repairs.

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E-boat operations were not possible owing to the weather.

U-boat Situation:

U 9 and U 23, which are in the operational area, were today ordered to carry out an offensive patrol to the southeast. The operation will start at 2000.

Minesweeping Activity:

Because of the weather, sweeping of the southwestern minofield gap at Sevastopol had to be abandoned by motor minesweepers of the Crimea group. For the same reason, the FZ-boats broke off minesweeping operations in the Tarkhankutzki area. No minesweeping planes operated over the Danube Delta.

Supply Traffic:

Convoys were seriously delayed by the weather. All sailings planned for today in the northwestern Black Sea had to be postponed for 24 hours.

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18 December, 1943

Simferopol

Enemy Situation:

It was not possible to fly any night reconnaissance because of the weather.

No shipping was observed in the course of daylight reconnaissance over the entire Black Sea and the western Sea of Azov. In the southern Sea of Azov 10 boats were detected in Genichesk harbor. A radio intercept report stated that 2 M.T.B.s and a motor minesweeper received the position of an unidentified vessel given as approximately 14 miles southsouthwest of Poti.

Main Naval D/F Station Reports:

Slight activity of small vessels in the east coast area. One M.T.B. was detected off the northern part of the east coast and 2 M.T.B.s and 1 motor gunboat off the southern part.

Main Naval D/F Station obtained no bearings on submarines. Four submarines are assumed to be in the operational area and 2 are returning to base.

Own Situation:

Weather forecast:

Variable winds, mainly N, force 5 - 4, cloudy to overcast, visibility 10 - 15 miles, sea 4 - 3.

Crimea and Kerch Strait:

- a. The enemy battery at Cape Panaghia (dairy farm) shelled 1st Battery, Naval Gunnery Detachment 613. 9th Battery returned the fire and silenced the enemy guns. Smoke was seen to come from the battery.

On 17 December the Grünland Detachment was transferred to the southern sector, while 4th Battery, Army Coastal Artillery 774 was returned to the Grünland Detachment from the area of Naval Gunnery Detachment 613.

b. Land Situation:

Morning: Only patrol activity. Our artillery destroyed ten of the 36 rocket throwers in operation northwest of Perekop. Numerous explosions were observed.

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Evening: Nothing to report.

- c. 17th Army H.Q. reported that a request had been submitted to Army Group A for reinforcements in the form of a combined operations company and a large assault boat company to be employed in the defense of Kerch Strait. This would make it possible for the patrol forces and naval ferry barges under Admiral, Black Sea to be employed mainly for the protection of convoy routes in the western Black Sea, and also as transports.

Army H.Q. thinks that naval forces will no longer be required to defend the coast, but that it will be necessary to have floating outposts to defend the east coast of Kerch and the deep shore flanks of Kerch Peninsula. They believe this measure to be necessary if we are to secure an efficient warning system and a speedy concentration of reserve troops on the coast, which is only occupied by small forces. The opinion of Admiral, Black Sea on this proposal is as follows:

Admiral, Black Sea welcomes Army H.Q.'s plan to use combined operations boats in the defense of Kerch Strait with the object of releasing the light naval forces operating there for urgent tasks elsewhere. The boats will only be able to operate in the bays of Kerch and Kamish Burun, because weather conditions and minefields in the southern part of Kerch Strait would make it impossible for the boats to remain there permanently. The same applies to the coastal waters south of Kerch Peninsula. (Off the north coast, stationary patrols would be impossible in any case because of weather conditions and lack of bases.) These duties will have to be the responsibility of the Navy, and our own strength, the enemy situation and weather conditions will be the determining factors in such operations. The small number of vessels available will not allow us to establish permanent positions off the coasts in question. Coastal defense forces must have efficient communications with the look-out system and be fully informed of radar reports and the results of air reconnaissance, so that it will not be possible for the enemy to make a surprise landing anywhere.

Operations for the night of 18/19 December:

1st Landing Craft Flotilla was ordered to send 3 naval ferry barges from Kamish Burun to a reconnaissance line in Kerch Strait between Chongolek and Kamish Burun from 1700 to 2400 this evening.

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Western Black Sea:

Submarine chaser No. 316 ran aground near Gura Ochakov. Attempts will be made to refloat her after the weather improves.

In reply to an inquiry sent on 14 December, Army Group A reported that they do not intend to re-occupy Kimburn Peninsula and that shore batteries are the only means of protecting shipping in the Dnieper estuary. Arrangements are being made to send reinforcements. Naval Group South has been informed.

An agreement has been reached with the Army that the responsibility for protecting the Dnieper estuary, which can be considered as a river, will be assumed by Combined Operations Regiment 770. Patrol vessels of the regiment will cruise along the northern side of this estuary and the Bug estuary at night and during poor visibility on the alert for enemy landing attempts.

Independent of these combined operations boat patrols, ships of Naval Port Commander, Ochakov will be in the Dnieper estuary on the look-out for minelaying planes.

Tug "Kreuzenstein" which ran aground west of Kimburn point on 17 December was towed in to Ochakov by harbor defense vessel RO 15.

Five tugs which are to tow a dock put in to Nikolaiev from Odessa. This towed convoy, with the 6,000-ton dock and a 2,000-ton dock inside it, is due to sail from Nikolaiev for Odessa at 0700 on 19 December.

At 1830 E-boat S 51 sailed from Ivan Baba for an engine overhaul in Constantza.

U-boat Situation:

Nothing to report.

Enemy Air Activity:

Kherson was raided on the evening of 17 December. High explosives and incendiaries were dropped. No damage to naval property.

Minesweeping Activity:

Four boats of 3rd Motor Minesweeper Flotilla continued sweeping the southwestern minefield gap at Sevastopol. In 2 checks, no mines were swept. The operation was abandoned at 1230 because of the weather.

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Supply Traffic:

Steamers and towed convoys in the western and northwestern Black Sea and off the south coast of the Crimea, which had put in to port because of the weather, put to sea again. No enemy interference.

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19 December, 1943

Simferopol

Enemy Situation:

Night reconnaissance over the northwestern Black Sea sighted nothing apart from our own convoys.

During the day, 11 planes carried out reconnaissance over the entire Black Sea in varying visibility without detecting any enemy shipping.

Main Naval D/F Station Reports:

At noon Main Naval D/F Station reported 2 M.T.B.s and 2 motor gunboats off the southern part of the east coast.

The situation in the evening showed no substantial change compared with noon. Main Naval D/F Station detected normal activity of small vessels off the east coast. Two minesweepers, 1 M.T.B. and 1 motor gunboat were intercepted off the southern part of the east coast. One gunboat or motorboat was detected in the Akhtari area.

Compared with past days there is no change in the submarine situation. Four submarines are believed to be still in the operational area. Two submarines were detected on return passage about 60 miles off Sukhum.

An agent's report on 15 December stated that 7 gunboats, 14 landing craft and 8 tugs carrying troops, tanks and guns are on passage from Primorsko Akhtari to Taman Peninsula to reinforce the troops in the northern Kerch sector.

Own Situation:

Weather forecast:

West coast Crimea: N winds, force 4 - 3, mainly overcast, visibility 8 - 10 miles, sea 2 - 3.

Yalta - Kerch: N - NW winds, force 4 - 5, squally, cloudy, visibility 12 miles, sea 3 - 4.

During the evening NE winds, force 7 - 8 off the entire south and east coasts of the Crimea.

Crimea and Kerch Strait:

- a. Three naval ferry barges in reconnaissance line in Kerch Strait between Chongelck and Kamish Burun sighted nothing.

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b. Land Situation:

Morning: In the northern part of Kerch several assault detachments were repulsed.

Three more rocket throwers were destroyed by our artillery near Perekop. Dive-bombers again scored hits on the Russki dam and bombed artillery and rocket thrower emplacements in the Perckop area.

Evening: Enemy artillery and mortar fire was slight on the northern front but had increased on the Baksy front. Our artillery shelled enemy movements and digging-in operations near Perekop.

Slight German and enemy air activity.

No operations in Kerch Strait for the coming night. Three naval ferry barges in Kamish Burun will be at 1 hour's readiness from 1700 until 0300.

Western Black Sea:

At 0745 E-boat S 51 put in to Constantza for an engine overhaul.

Up to now, attempts to refloat submarine chaser No. 316 which ran aground near Gura Ochakov have been unsuccessful. It will not be possible to continue the attempts until the weather has improved.

At 0700 the Nikolaiev-Odessa dock convoy sailed from Nikolaiev according to plan.

In the Kherson area there was lively artillery and mortar fire and slight machine-gunfire and rifle fire.

The enemy now seems to be aware of the concentrated anti-submarine activity which has been going on for some time, as enemy submarines in the western Black Sea have been maintaining radio silence for some days. This will make it very difficult to plan anti-submarine patrols in future, as these were based on bearings obtained by Main Naval D/F Station.

Nevertheless I shall continue to send all available submarine chasers to the Tarkhankutzki area. Enemy submarines will be concentrated in this area, where there is a bottleneck in traffic to and from Sevastopol, even if the enemy realizes that our defense forces are also concentrated there. We must avoid scattering our few submarine chasers, even if this means temporarily neglecting less important areas.

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Commander, 1st Submarine Chaser Flotilla was given the following orders:

- a. At 1700 on 19 December, submarine chasers Nos. 103 and 106 will sail from Sevastopol to carry out anti-submarine operations in air grid squares 2630, 2650 and 2670. If an enemy submarine is detected by Main Naval D/F Station or sighted by air reconnaissance in the adjacent large grid squares, the submarine chasers will search for the submarine reported, provided that they are not already in pursuit of a submarine which they themselves have detected. Submarines must be stubbornly attacked. A radio report should be transmitted when a submarine is detected or attacked.
- b. The boats will sail via route Green as far as SN 3, then proceed in line abreast into the above-mentioned patrol area.
- c. The boats will not return to port until they receive orders from Admiral, Black Sea.
- d. The senior commander will be in command of the force. His boat should be reported.

At 1915 the boats sailed from Sevastopol.

Tug "Habicht" sank while shifting berth in the south bay at Sevastopol. Salvage work is in progress.

U-boat Situation:

U-boats in the Poti operational area (U 9 and U 23) sighted nothing.

Enemy Air Activity:

At 0900 6 planes attacked the Odessa-Ak Mechet towed convoy with torpedoes while it was entering Ak Mechet. Three torpedoes were launched and the vessels were also machine-gunned. The convoy took evasive action and no damage was caused.

Minesweeping Activity:

Because of the weather (NE winds, force 6), 3rd Motor Minesweeper Flotilla had to abandon sweeping the southwestern minefield gap at Sevastopol.

FZ-boats swept the area off the approach channel to Sevastopol for standard mines. In 6 checks, no mines were swept.

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Because of the weather, neither the FZ-boats off Ak Mechet nor the minesweeping planes were able to operate.

Supply Traffic:

Most of the convoys planned for the western and northwestern Black Sea were unable to sail because of the weather. Nothing to report from convoys except the aerial torpedo attack on the Odessa-Ak Mechet towed convoy.

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20 December, 1943

Simferopol

Enemy Situation:

No night reconnaissance because of the weather. No enemy ships were sighted in the course of daylight reconnaissance over the entire Black Sea.

One freighter of 2,000 tons, course east, was detected off the Turkish coast about 20 miles southeast of Sinope, and 1 passenger ship of 3,000 tons, course west, about 8 miles off Bafra Burnu.

A radio intercept report stated that 1 destroyer and 1 minesweeper received the position of a vessel off Batum. The position and the time of sighting - 41° 31' N, 41° 21' E, 1525 - were transmitted to all naval forces. (This position is about 10.5 miles southwest of Batum.)

Main Naval D/F Station Reports:

Two M.T.B.s were detected off the northern part of the east coast and another minesweeper off the southern part.

The minesweeper and the destroyer detected in the southeastern Black Sea were presumably proceeding to Novorossisk.

Submarines detected: 1 in the northwestern Black Sea and 3 more thought to be in the operational area. One submarine was detected between the eastern and central Black Sea.

Naval Shore Commander, Crimea reported that at 1355 a submarine was sighted submerging off Yalta, course west. Distance from the shore 500 meters. Convoys sailing off the Crimean coast have been warned.

Own Situation:

Weather forecast:

Western Black Sea: NE winds, force 4, towards evening veering to E or SE, force 3 - 2, overcast, light showers, visibility 6 - 10 miles, sea 3 - 2.

Cape Khersonese - Korch: NE winds, force 6 - 5, during the afternoon E winds, force 5 - 4, overcast, light showers, visibility 8 - 10 miles, sea 5 - 4.

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Crimea and Kerch Strait:

a. There were no naval ferry barge operations in Kerch Strait last night.

b. Land Situation:

Morning: Two patrol detachments were driven back in the Sivash beachhead. A few enemy planes harassed our lines. Otherwise no incidents.

Evening: Lively enemy shelling at the Baksy beachhead. No infantry action.

On the northern front, an enemy attack by 2 companies carried out under cover of a smoke screen west of Urshin was broken up by our counter-fire.

To mislead the enemy as to the periodicity of our patrols in Kerch Strait, there will again be no operations during the coming night. The naval ferry barges in Kamish Burun will be at 1 hour's readiness from 1600 until 0400.

Western Black Sea:

Attempts to refloat submarine chaser No. 316 which ran aground off Gura Ochakov have been resumed and a tow line has been paid out to her.

At 0400 the Nikolaiev-Odessa dock convoy entered Odessa according to plan.

At 1445 the tugs and escort vessels again sailed for Nikolaiev to transfer a 150-ton crane to Odessa during the night of 22/23 December.

Submarine chasers Nos. 103 and 106 reported from the Tarkhankutzki area that no anti-submarine operations could be carried out in the existing weather. The boats have been ordered to continue operations if the weather improves.

At 1245 2 planes launched an aerial torpedo attack on submarine chaser No. 103 about 6 miles southeast of Tarkhankutzki. Evasive action was taken.

South Coast Crimea:

E-boat operations still impossible because of the weather.

U-boat Situation:

Nothing to report.

Minesweeping Activity:

Five motor minesweepers of 3rd Motor Minesweeper Flotilla continued sweeping the southwestern minefield gap at Sevastopol, covering the area eight times without result. At 1200 the operation had to be abandoned because of the weather.

Two minesweeping planes swept the Tarkhankutzki area. Sixty strips were covered twice without result.

Supply Traffic:

Convoys off the south and west Crimean coasts and in the western and northwestern Black Sea proceeded without enemy interference.

The following convoys are at sea:

- a. 4 naval ferry barges and motor vessel "Anna":
Sevastopol - Ivan Baba.
- b. 3 naval ferry barges: Thoodosia - Yalta.
- c. Towed convoys: Ak Mechet - Sevastopol.
Steamer convoys: Sevastopol - Constantza/
Sulina.

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21 December, 1943

Simferopol

Enemy Situation:

No night reconnaissance due to lack of planes. During the day 12 planes carried out reconnaissance over the entire Black Sea without sighting any enemy ships. A freighter of 3,000 tons was sighted off the Turkish coast about 28 miles northeast of Samsun, course southeast, and another freighter of 4,000 tons about 10 miles northeast of Ayanzik, course west.

Main Naval D/F Station Reports:

At noon the only enemy ship in the southeastern Black Sea was a minesweeper.

Very slight activity of small vessels off the east coast. Only 1 M.T.B. was detected at sea off the southern part of the east coast.

After several days of radio silence by the submarines, it was again possible to obtain bearings by radio. However, no exact information on the position of the submarines could be obtained because the radiograms were brief and only single line bearings could be taken. Two submarines were detected in the northwestern Black Sea, while a third was heard tuned for reception. Altogether 4 - 5 submarines are assumed to be in the operational area.

Own Situation:

Weather forecast:

West coast Crimea: Variable winds, force 2 - 3, mainly overcast, light showers, visibility 6 - 10 miles, sea 1 - 2.

Yalta - Kerch: N winds, force 3 - 4, overcast, showers, visibility 8 - 10 miles, local fogbanks, sea 2 - 3.

Crimea and Kerch Strait:

- a. Last night there were no naval ferry barge operations in Kerch Strait.
- b. Naval Gunnery Detachment 613 reported that there was slight ferry traffic to the northern beachhead and close to the Taman coast.

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4th Battery shelled a large raft containing 25 men off Kolonka. Three hits were scored. Six men swam to the shore, presumably the rest were wounded or killed. The raft was ablaze.

c. Land Situation:

Morning: On the evening of 20 December, an advanced position was lost in the course of an enemy company attack on the northern front. A counter-attack is in progress. Otherwise only German and enemy patrol activity with somewhat livelier enemy shelling.

Evening: Nothing to report from either front.

1st Landing Craft Flotilla and Naval Gunnery Detachment 613 were given the following orders for the night of 21/22 December:

1. At 2100 3 naval ferry barges will sail from Kamish Burun to a patrol line between Chongelek and Kamish Burun. The naval ferry barges will stand on and off in close formation, speed 5 knots.
2. Task: To prevent enemy landings and to attack enemy forces. If enemy vessels are detected approaching, the coast is to be warned by a Most Immediate signal.
3. Naval ferry barges will re-enter Kamish Burun at 0500.
4. If enemy batteries shell the naval ferry barges, Naval Gunnery Detachment 613 will engage such batteries immediately.

The naval ferry barges sailed from Kamish Burun as scheduled.

I consider it necessary to send 3 boats of 1st Landing Craft Flotilla to reinforce the naval ferry barge base in Theodosia so that a sufficient number of light naval forces will be available immediately in the event of further enemy landing attempts in Kerch Strait. At the same time these naval ferry barges will patrol the Theodosia-Kamish Burun route which captured Russian charts show to be mined in a few places. They will be equipped with oropesa gear.

Commander, 1st Landing Craft Flotilla was accordingly given the following orders:

1. 1st Landing Craft Flotilla will transfer naval ferry barges F 152, F 301 and F 335 from Sevastopol to Theodosia for operations in Kerch Strait and off the south coast of Kerch Peninsula.

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2. The naval ferry barges will be equipped with oropesa gear and, if possible, 2 cm. quadruple mountings.
3. The naval ferry barges can be used as supply transports on passage to Theodosia.
4. Report probable sailing date and commanders.
5. On arrival in Theodosia, the naval ferry barges will come directly under the command of Admiral, Black Sea for operations.

Western Black Sea:

After being refloated, submarine chaser No. 316 which ran aground off Gura Ochakov put in to Sulina at 1700 with two salvage vessels. At 1330 tugs "Danzig" and "Wachau" sailed from Nikolaiev for Odessa to transfer the 150-ton floating dock.

At 2330 this operation had to be canceled because of a heavy fall of snow.

From 1300 to 1330, our mortars in Ochakov shelled Kimburn point. Otherwise nothing to report.

The port and city of Kherson were heavily bombarded by artillery and mortars. At 1235 naval ferry barges F 139, F 170 and F 307, which are to be converted into naval ferry barges (guns) in Linz, put in to Sulina from Sevastopol.

Submarine chasers Nos. 103 and 106 are on anti-submarine patrol in the Tarkhankutzki area. About 1200 submarine chaser No. 103 was attacked by a submarine some 20 miles southeast of Tarkhankutzki. Two torpedoes were fired. The submarine was not observed before the attack. One torpedo passed under the submarine chaser's stern. After 8 depth charges had been dropped, a large oil patch appeared. Both submarine chasers are in pursuit.

It is thought that mines were laid from the air at 2000 about 4,000 meters northwest of Cape Constantin (Sevastopol).

Commander, 30th Motor Minesweeper Flotilla was therefore ordered to dispatch FZ-boats to check the route from 2 miles north of Green 42 via Green 42 to the Inkermann beacon.

At 1100 fire broke out in lighter "Braila" in Sevastopol. It was caused by careless smoking. Immediate stops were taken to deal with the fire but 52 seriously wounded prisoners of war

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perished in the flames and 38 were injured. The fire was finally put out at 1330. No damage to the lighter or the ammunition cargo.

In reply to an inquiry from Commander, 1st Landing Craft Flotilla concerning the degaussing of 2 naval ferry barges, orders were given to send naval ferry barges F 135 and F 446 to Constantza. F 135 together with F 476 on her return from Ivan Baba is to be used as a naval transport. The naval ferry barges will return to Sevastopol immediately after degaussing.

At 0610 motor vessel "Anna" sprang a leak forward after colliding with the wreck of "Baikal" off the entrance to Yalta. The damage is being repaired by a diver.

U-boat Situation:

At 1500 U 9 commenced return passage to Constantza from the operational area off Poti.

Minesweeping Activity:

From 0615 to 1715, 4 boats of 3rd Motor Minesweeper Flotilla swept the southwestern minefield gap at Sevastopol. No mines.

From 0600 to 1615, 4 FZ-boats carried out a check sweep for standard mines off Tarkhankutzki without result.

Supply Traffic:

A. Apart from the mishap to motor vessel "Anna" in the Sevastopol-Yalta naval ferry barge convoy, there was nothing to report from convoys sailing off the Crimean coast.

The following convoys reached their destinations safely:

- a. 4 naval ferry barges and motor vessel "Anna" put in to Yalta from Sevastopol.
- b. 3 naval ferry barges and tug "Kehl" (with tow) put in to Sevastopol from Yalta.
- c. 3 naval ferry barges put in to Sevastopol from Theodosia to be repaired.
- d. 3 naval ferry barges carrying assault guns put in to Ak Mechet from Odessa.
- e. The towed convoy comprising "Junak", "Theben", "Kimburn", "Lilbeck", "Lobau" and tow put in to Sevastopol from Odessa.

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B. Crimea supplies:

Because of recent delays in the loading and unloading of ships, the following memorandum has been sent to 17th Army H.Q. with copy to Group South:

From 1 - 20 December, 20,700 tons of supplies were sent to the Crimea. Hence, although there were no losses or delays caused by enemy action during this period, the actual amount of supplies sent fell short of the target figure of 30,000 tons by 9,300 tons.

Next to the bad weather, which caused delays and even a total stoppage of convoys on several days, the main reason for this deficiency was the bad use made of the available tonnage. An extraordinarily long time was taken to load and unload ships, especially large steamers. For instance, steamer "Ardeal", which entered Sevastopol on 4 December, was not ready to sail again until 19 December. Thus fifteen days were required for loading and unloading. The monthly turn round, on which the calculation for the target figure was based, cannot be achieved if a ship has to stay 15 days in Sevastopol.

Army H.Q. was urgently requested to take the necessary measures to remedy this state of affairs and not to interfere with the organization of Admiral, Black Sea by giving direct orders concerning certain cargoes on certain vessels.

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22 December, 1943

Simferopol

Enemy Situation:

No night reconnaissance. No enemy vessels were sighted in the course of daylight reconnaissance over the entire Black Sea.

The following vessels were sighted off the Turkish coast:

One coastal vessel of 800 tons, course west, about 13 miles northeast of Inebolu, 1 freighter of 4,000 tons, course west, 5 miles northwest of Cide. One freighter of 5,000 tons, course east, was sighted about 20 miles northeast of Zonguldak and also 6 small coastal sailing vessels, course west.

A radio intercept report stated that at 1005 a minesweeper received the position of an unknown vessel given as about 19 miles northnorthwest of Poti.

Main Naval D/F Station Reports:

In the afternoon 3 M.T.B.s, 1 motor gunboat and 1 minesweeper were located between the central and southern Caucasus coasts, probably proceeding to the northwest.

In the evening destroyer "G" was detected off the northern part of the east coast, probably in the Ghelenjik-Anapa area. Two more minesweepers are thought to be in the same area.

Submarines detected: 4 in the northwestern Black Sea as far as the west coast. Submarine "G" is assumed to be in the operational area. It may have been this submarine which was attacked by submarine chasers Nos. 103 and 106.

Own Situation:

Weather forecast:

West coast Crimea: SE - E winds, force 3 - 4, overcast, light showers, visibility 6 - 10 miles, sea 2 - 3.

Yalta - Kerch: E winds, force 4 - 4 (sic), overcast, light showers, visibility 6 - 10 miles, sea 2 - 3.

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Crimea and Kerch Strait:

a. During the night of 21/22 December, 3 naval ferry barges in patrol line in Kerch Strait made no contact with the enemy.

b. Land Situation:

Morning: All quiet during the night except for German and enemy patrol activity.

Evening: On the northern front the enemy shelled our main defense line, particularly near Djinbuluk. The bridge over the Sivash north of Russki is now repaired. There was brisk enemy supply traffic.

After heavy artillery fire, the enemy attack in the Baksy beachhead south of Hill 34.7 was repulsed.

There will be no operations in Kerch Strait during the coming night. The naval ferry barges in Kamish Burun will be at 1 hour's readiness from 1700 until 0400.

Western Black Sea:

The transfer of the 150-ton crane from Nikolaiev to Odessa was held up because of the ice block near Woloshki. Tug "Lobau" was sent out to break the ice.

Naval Liaison Officer to Army Group A reported that plans are under way for evacuating the Kherson bridgehead. In the appended report (ASM Gkdos. Chofs 340/43), I refer to the unfavorable and perhaps decisive effect which the evacuation of this bridgehead on the left bank of the Dnieper would have on the restoration of land communications necessary for retaining our hold on the Crimea.

At 1215 submarine chasers Nos. 103 and 106 again detected a submarine at the same spot in the Tarkhankutzki area. All remaining depth charges were dropped. Oil patches and air bubbles were seen to appear, but no wreckage. At 1245 submarine chaser "Xanten" sailed from Ak Mechet to give assistance.

As the weather has improved, E-boats will again operate off the Caucasus coast.

1st E-Boat Flotilla received the following orders:

During the night of 22/23 December, 2 E-boats will operate between Cape Utrich and Oseraika valley, while 3 E-boats operate against enemy

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shipping close to the Caucasus coast between Idokopas and Dzhubg. The decision to stay in lurking positions or to carry out an offensive patrol, depending on weather conditions and visibility, will be left to the group commanders. Torpedoes may be fired at any worthwhile target. At 1430 the boats will sail from Ivan Baba in close formation. The 2 boats will begin return passage at 0300 and the others at 0200. They will sail within range of the coast both outward and homeward bound. The boats are free to attack submarines in the operational area on both outward and return passage. The flotilla has been informed that none of our own vessels is at sea east of Ivan Baba.

1st Air Corps was ordered to send out night reconnaissance planes to cooperate with the E-boats off the Caucasus coast between Anapa and Tuapse from 1900 to 0300.

At 1430 the E-boats put out from Ivan Baba for the operation.

U-boat Situation:

At 1345 U 24 entered Sulina from Galatz.

At 0700, after completing her dockyard repairs, U 19 sailed from Constantza on her 16th operation (7th Black Sea operation). Route: Constantza via the northern route to the operational area off Poti.

Minesweeping Activity:

Five boats of 3rd Motor Minesweeper Flotilla carried out 12 sweeps in the southwestern mine-field gap at Sevastopol without result.

FZ-boats made a check sweep for standard mines off Cape Tarkhankutzki and off Sevastopol (where minelaying was suspected). No mines were swept.

Supply Traffic:

Convoys in the western Black Sea and off the Crimean coast ran as scheduled without enemy interference.

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23 December, 1943

Simferopol

Enemy Situation:

Daylight reconnaissance was flown over the central and eastern Black Sea, concentrating on the northeastern area. No enemy vessels were sighted.

There was no night reconnaissance because of the weather.

A radio intercept report stated that a submarine chaser had transmitted the position of a vessel about 8 miles northwest of Ochamchiri to a gunboat and an M.T.B.

Main Naval D/F Station Reports:

At noon only 1 minesweeper was detected off the central part of the east coast. In the evening, Main Naval D/F Station reported continuous activity of small vessels between the central and southern parts of the east coast. One minesweeper, 3 M.T.B.s, 2 gunboats, 1 patrol boat and 1 unidentified vessel were detected at sea. Off the northern part of the east coast 1 motor gunboat was detected and off the southern part destroyer "G", probably sailing from Tuapse on a southeasterly course.

Naval Shore Commander, Caucasus reported that at 0900 a large destroyer, 1 torpedoboat or large gunboat and 4 small vessels were sighted about 2 miles southwest of Zhelezni Rog. The ships were on a northwesterly course. When the fog lifted, the destroyer turned and made off to the southeast. The torpedoboat or gunboat stopped and the 4 small vessels continued on their course. Air reconnaissance flown immediately afterwards and 3 more times in the course of the day over the southern part of Kerch Strait and off the south coast of Taman Peninsula up to 15 miles southeast of Zhelezni Rog detected nothing.

It must therefore be assumed that the observations from the shore were inexact, or that the size of the ships was overestimated because of the weather. Presumably the boats put in to Taman.

Submarines detected: 2 in the northwestern Black Sea including the waters off the west coast of the Crimea. Another submarine was deduced to be in the operational area. A submarine which was detected about 50 miles

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south of Sevastopol is presumably on return passage. A radio intercept report stated that the submarine which has been attacked several times since 21 December by submarine chaser No. 103 can be only submarine "G", which is now returning to port. Presumably she has been damaged.

Own Situation:

Weather forecast:

E winds, force 2 - 3, cloudy, visibility 10 miles after early morning mist, fogbanks towards dawn, sea 2.

Crimea and Kerch Strait:

a. Last night the naval ferry barges in Kamish Burun were at 1 hour's readiness. Nothing to report.

b. Land Situation:

Morning: On both fronts only patrol activity with heavy artillery fire locally.

Evening: Only slight artillery and mortar fire. Isolated enemy fighters over the rear of the eastern front. On the northern front the observation of enemy positions was restricted by fog.

During the coming night the naval ferry barges in Kamish Burun will be at 1 hour's readiness.

Western Black Sea:

We may expect Russian operations against our coasts and convoys on Christmas Day and New Year's Day because the enemy will assume that we shall relax our watchfulness and operational readiness on these days.

Naval Shore Commanders, Commander, Convoys and Escorts, 1st E-Boat Flotilla, 3rd Motor Minesweeper Flotilla and 1st Landing Craft Flotilla were therefore given orders to be very much on the alert on these days.

Tug "Wachau" and a lighter, which were towing a 150-ton crane from Nikolaiev to Odessa, ran aground with the crane off the northern part of Kimburn point. The crane was hit 25 times by artillery. Because of the winds blowing against the shore and the heavy artillery fire, it is impossible to salvage the crane at the moment.

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Submarine chasers Nos. 2301, 2307 and 2308 (armed fishing vessels), which were detailed to relieve submarine chasers Nos. 103, 106 and "Xanten", were informed of a radio intercept report stating that there are several enemy submarines in the Eupatoria-Tarkhankutzki area. The boats were also informed that the submarine chasers to be relieved are at present attacking a submarine thought to be damaged in air grid square 2668 (south of Tarkhankutzki). Systematic attacks have been made more difficult by the breakdown of the search gear.

Submarine chaser No. 2301 was ordered to sail from Sevastopol at 1400 with Nos. 2307 and 2308 and to proceed at maximum speed via route Green to air grid square 2668 to relieve submarine chasers Nos. 103 and 106 and "Xanten" which are pursuing the damaged submarine.

When the submarine has been sunk, the submarine chasers will carry out an anti-submarine patrol in air grid squares 2660, 2680 and 3670. The boats will not return to port until they receive orders from Admiral, Black Sea. Senior officer will be the commander of vessel No. 2301.

No. 103 was ordered to remain at the place of the attack until relieved and then return to Sevastopol with "Xanten" and No. 106. She reported that the sea was thickly covered with oil for three miles around. The wreck was located by "Xanten" and depth charges were again dropped. The submarine has now been submerged for 60 hours and is probably sunk.

1st Landing Craft Flotilla reported that the sailing of the 3 naval ferry barges to be transferred to Theodosia had had to be postponed by one day because of the loading of the barges. The craft will presumably sail on the afternoon of 25 December.

Last night 1st E-Boat Flotilla carried out the prescribed operation against enemy shipping off the Caucasus coast.

From 1830 until 0300, the northern group remained in lurking positions in air grid squares 7533 - 7518. Nothing was sighted. There was a powerful searchlight near Anapa.

From 2030 until 2305, the southern group remained in lurking positions in air grid square 8567, then in patrol line as far as air grid square 8554. At 0200 the boats commenced return passage. No enemy shipping. Lively searchlight activity off Ghelonjik. During December, the operations of 1st E-Boat Flotilla

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against enemy shipping close to the Caucasus coast north of Tuapse have been unsuccessful because neither convoys nor patrols have been encountered. At present it would appear that only a few supplies, if any, are being taken by sea to Ghelenjik and Anapa. The front near Kerch also seems to be adequately supplied by railroad transport and trucks to the loading places in the Sea of Azov and at Kossa Chushka. Only air reconnaissance can verify this assumption. Despite repeated requests, there has been no reconnaissance of the Caucasus coast for a long time because of shortage of planes.

U-boat Situation:

At 2330 U 24, escorted by motor minesweeper R 197, entered Constantza from Sulina.

Minesweeping Activity:

From 0600 until 1700 the southwestern minefield gap was again swept by 5 motor minesweepers and Sevastopol harbor entrance by 2 FZ-boats. No mines swept.

Two minesweeping planes covered the Cape Tarkhankutzki area. Sixty strips were twice swept without result.

Supply Traffic:

Only slight convoy traffic because of the weather.

- a. The Ak Mechet-Odessa towed convoy turned about because of fog and anchored off Ak Mechet.
- b. "Lola" and 3 motor minesweepers are proceeding from Sulina to Sevastopol.

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24 December, 1943

Simferopol

Enemy Situation:

Night reconnaissance had to be postponed again because of the weather.

No enemy shipping was detected in the course of daylight reconnaissance over the entire Black Sea, concentrating on the northeastern area.

Off the Turkish coast 1 coastal vessel was sighted about 25 miles northwest of Samsun and 1 freighter of 3,000 tons, course west, 20 miles northwest of Samsun.

Main Naval D/F Station Reports:

During the forenoon, Main Naval D/F Station detected a destroyer presumably off the southern part of the east coast and a minesweeper in the Batum area.

During the evening there was a general decrease in the activity of small vessels. Two motor gunboats and an unidentified vessel were deduced to be between the central and southern parts of the east coast, while 2 more M.T.B.s and 2 small vessels of an unidentified type were detected off the southern part. One motor gunboat was detected in the Sea of Azov.

Submarines detected: 1 in the northwestern Black Sea and 1 southwest of Sevastopol. It is thought that there are 2 more submarines in the operational area. One more submarine was detected in the eastern Black Sea.

It is striking that for the past few days submarines approaching the operational area in the northwestern Black Sea have made a wide turn to the west or south and then approached Eupatoria Bay on a northerly course. It may therefore be assumed that the enemy suspects minefields along our coast or is aware of the minefields west of Sevastopol.

Own Situation:

Weather forecast:

W winds, force 3 - 4, visibility 10 - 12 miles, fog in patches, sea 2 - 3.

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The following teletype was received from
Commanding General, Army Group A:

"To Commanding Admiral, Black Sea:

Gratefully acknowledge all the assistance and support you have given by placing naval units under my command, and send my sincere thanks and best wishes for a merry Christmas and a victorious New Year.

Heil Hitler!

(Signed) von Kleist.

Field Marshal."

Crimea and Kerch Strait:

- a. Last night the naval ferry barges in Kamish Burun were at 1 hour's readiness. Nothing to report.

Operations for the night of 24/25 December:

The vessels sighted off the Taman coast between Cape Tuszla and Zhelezni Rog in the forenoon of 23 December give reason to suppose that the enemy is concentrating boats in Taman for operations during the night of 24/25 December, which would be especially suitable for this purpose. The enemy will assume that we shall relax on this night.

I have therefore decided to send 3 naval ferry barges to a patrol line in Kerch Strait between Cape Takil and Kamish Burun on Christmas Eve.

The boats will sail from Kamish Burun at 1700 and will patrol in close formation at a speed of 5 knots until daybreak. The boats will then enter Kamish Burun.

1st Landing Craft Flotilla has been instructed accordingly. Naval Gunnery Detachment 613 has been ordered to silence the enemy batteries if they shell the naval ferry barges.

The naval ferry barges were in position at the correct time.

Western Black Sea:

Reports from Naval Port Commander, Nikolaiev state that there was moderate artillery fire, machine-gunning and rifle fire in Kherson. Otherwise no change.

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An attempt is being made to find out whether the 150-ton crane and tug "Wachau" with lighter, which are aground off the northern tip of Kimburn Peninsula, can be refloated if the enemy battery is suppressed by bombing or our own artillery.

Now that 3 armed fishing vessels have been sent to reinforce the submarine chaser force, submarine chaser "Xanten" is again at the disposal of the Commander, Convoys and Escorts, Black Sea for escort and patrol duties.

After being relieved by submarine chasers Nos. 2301, 2307 and 2308, submarine chasers Nos. 103 and 106 and "Xanten" are putting in to Sevastopol. Nos. 2301, 2307 and 2308 are continuing anti-submarine operations in Eupatoria Bay.

In view of the fact that 6 enemy vessels were sighted off Zhelezni Rog yesterday morning, it may safely be assumed that there will be traffic off the north Caucasus coast and supply ships and light naval forces in Anapa. Therefore an E-boat operation in this area during the coming night promises success.

Four boats of 1st E-Boat Flotilla have accordingly been instructed to sail from Ivan Baba at 1500 and to stand on and off close to the coast between Cape Utrich and Utrich Nok.

Every worthwhile target should be attacked with torpedoes, while smaller vessels should be engaged with guns.

If no target presents itself before 2300, the flotilla will leave the operational area and carry out a surprise shelling of the port of Anapa at close range. All available E-boats equipped with 4 cm. guns will take part in the operation and ships in Anapa roads may also be attacked with torpedoes. The E-boats are free to attack submarines. After the operation, the E-boats will return to Ivan Baba.

1st Air Corps was requested:

- a. to find out, if possible today, the number of ships in port at Anapa and to inform 1st E-Boat Flotilla immediately;
- b. to send out night reconnaissance planes to cooperate with the E-boats and also to cover the sound of the boats as they approach Anapa and to drop flares to light the target.

At 1500 the boats sailed from Ivan Baba but had to turn about at 1800 about 15 miles west of

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Anapa because of NNE winds, force 5, sea 4 - 5 and a heavy swell. When the boats had passed the southern entrance to Korch Strait, the weather did not improve. In continuous fog, they could only keep contact with one another by stern lights and searchlights. Because of the rough sea washing the decks, the boats could not use their armament, and at 2050 they put in to Ivan Baba again.

U-boat Situation:

U 19 is proceeding in a southeasterly direction to operational area "Otter". U 23 is sailing to the northern part of operational areas "Panter" and "Biber". At 0400 U 9 will be 24 hours from Constantza. At 0400 on 25 December, motor minesweeper R 197 will be at position CS 1 to escort U 9 to Constantza.

Minesweeping Activity:

From 0600 to 1500, 5 boats of 3rd Motor Minesweeper Flotilla swept the southwestern minefield gap without result.

Two minesweeping planes carried out a sweep in the Cape Tarkhankutzki area. Thirty strips were swept once without result. The operation had to be broken off because of the weather.

Supply Traffic:

Convoys were held up by fog. The remainder of the Ak Mechet-Odessa towed convoy, comprising tug "Lobau", "Kornion" and "Dresden", had to return to Ak Mechet.

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25 December, 1943

Simferopol

Enemy Situation:

Night reconnaissance over the northeastern Black Sea sighted no enemy vessels. On the return flight, the reconnaissance plane bombed Anapa, scoring direct hits on anti-aircraft emplacements.

No enemy shipping was sighted in the course of daylight reconnaissance over the entire Black Sea.

One Turkish freighter of 2,000 tons, course west, was detected close to the Turkish coast about 5 miles west of Amasra.

A radio intercept report stated that a submarine, position unknown, received an air reconnaissance report on a ship or convoy which had been sighted. The same report was also transmitted to another submarine.

Main Naval D/F Station Reports:

During the afternoon 3 M.T.B.s and 2 motor gunboats were detected between the northern and southern parts of the east coast and 1 M.T.B. and 1 unidentified small vessel off the southern part. During the evening moderate activity of small vessels continued in the northern to central Black Sea. One minesweeper, another M.T.B. and 1 motor gunboat were detected.

Submarines detected: 1 about 120 miles east of Constantza and 2 in the operational area in unidentified positions. One submarine was about 60 miles west of Anaklia, returning to port, and a fifth boat was located between the eastern and central Black Sea, presumably putting to sea.

Own Situation:

Weather forecast:

E winds, force 4, cloudy to fair, sea 2 - 3, visibility 6 - 10 miles.

Crimoa and Kerch Strait:

- a. From 1700 to 0500 on 24/25 December, naval ferry barges were in patrol line in Kerch Strait between Cape Takil and Kamish Burun, but sighted nothing.

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b. Land Situation:

Morning: Nothing to report apart from German and enemy patrol activity.

Evening: Nothing to report.

There will be no operations in Kerch Strait during the coming night. The naval ferry barges in Kamish Burun will be at 1 hour's readiness from 1600 until 0500 on 26 December.

17th Army H.Q. reported that the request submitted to Army Group A for combined operations boats and large assault boats to be used in the defense of Kerch Strait has been refused.

Because the plans to use these boats in Kerch Strait have now fallen through, Army H.Q. submitted the following request:

- a. That the south coast of Kerch Peninsula, especially Theodosia Bay, should be protected against surprise enemy landings near Theodosia.
- b. That offensive patrols be carried out in Kerch Strait to show the enemy that they must at all times reckon with the intervention of the Navy.

Commanding General does not believe that the radar, air reconnaissance and the coastal defense measures proposed by Admiral, Black Sea will be sufficient to prevent a surprise landing on the south coast of Kerch Peninsula. He is of the opinion that there should be permanent night patrols off Theodosia Bay. This request, however, can only be met insofar as Admiral, Black Sea has already ordered 3 naval ferry barges to be transferred to Theodosia for operations off the south coast of Kerch Peninsula. These boats are intended for night patrol between Cape Takil and Theodosia, concentrating on Theodosia Bay, just as the naval ferry barges stationed in Kamish Burun patrol in Kerch Strait.

There are not sufficient craft available to screen the entire coastline every night. The object of transferring the boats to Theodosia for coastal patrol duties is as follows:

- a. To have at least some naval ferry barges at hand for immediate operations in the event of enemy landings.
- b. To show the enemy, who will be informed of the patrols by their own reconnaissance or their

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intelligence organization, that they must expect the same disruption of supplies in the Theodosia area as they encountered in the Eltigen landings.

17th Army H.Q. has been informed accordingly.

In 1 Skl. Ib 4017/43 dated 25 December, Naval High Command again drew attention to the military and political importance of the Crimea as regards the favorable development of the war in Europe. The report also referred to the necessity of finding a solution for the Crimea problems within the framework of the entire eastern front, with the Navy assisting the Army with all means at its disposal.

The principle in all measures adopted by Admiral, Black Sea in respect of the dispersal of personnel and material which started towards the end of October of this year has always been - sometimes against the orders of Army Group - to stabilize the Crimea situation as quickly as possible, and to ensure that the supplies upon which the defense of the Crimea depends are safely brought across the sea. All the measures which I adopted in naval operations or coastal defense were guided by this principle.

Bearing this in mind, the removal of the Quartermaster Staff to Odessa, which was carried out under the dispersal measures on 29 October, has already been canceled. The Staff has been ordered to return to the Operational Staff at Simferopol at the beginning of January 1944.

Western Black Sea:

Naval Port Commander, Nikolaiev reported heavy bombardment of the city of Kherson and machine-gunfire and rifle fire in the harbor area. During the day, our own guns shelled enemy positions in Ochakov. Enemy guns are shelling Pervomeisk and stranded vessels near Kimburn. At Pervomeisk naval gunnery lighter No. 4 was seriously damaged by 6 direct hits. One 8.8 cm. gun and one 2 cm. gun were put out of action. The naval gunnery lighter cannot be refloated. The order has been given to salvage the rest of the 8.8 cm. ammunition. Naval Port Commander, Ochakov was ordered to report whether the guns of naval gunnery lighter No. 4 can still be fired, despite the direct hits on the craft.

At 2030 naval ferry barge F 563, which was carrying the barrel of a railroad gun, ran aground off Eupatoria lighthouse near Cape Mainak. The boat cannot be refloated under her own power. Salvage work has been arranged. Three armed

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fishing vessels carried out anti-submarine operations in Eupatoria Bay. Nothing to report.

Commander, 3rd Motor Minesweeper Flotilla was ordered to send motor minesweepers R 165, R 205 and R 206, which are lying in Sevastopol and are not required for operations until 27 December (convoy duties), to sweep the southwestern mine-field gap at Sevastopol.

Commander, Convoys and Escorts, Black Sea and Commander, Convoys and Escorts, Crimean Coast have been informed accordingly.

U-boat Situation:

At 0815 U 9 entered Constantza from her 14th operation (8th Black Sea operation).

Minesweeping Activity:

None.

Supply Traffic:

The following convoys were at sea off the Crimean coast:

- a. The towed convoy, comprising "Kimburn", "Junak", "Schürmann 10", 7 more vessels and 5 submarine chasers, from Sevastopol via Ak Mechet to Odessa.
- b. "Dresden", etc. and 4 submarine chasers from Ak Mechet to Odessa.
- c. Five naval ferry barges from Sevastopol via Ak Mechet to Odessa.
- d. Four naval ferry barges (repairs) from Theodosia to Sevastopol and the escorted steamer "Geiseric" to Sevastopol.

In the first convoy tug "Schürmann 10" which was towing a lighter ran aground in fog off Eupatoria at 2000. Situation not yet clear.

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26 December, 1943

Simferopol

Enemy Situation:

There was no night reconnaissance because of the weather.

No enemy shipping was sighted in the course of air reconnaissance over the central to eastern Black Sea in difficult weather conditions. One Turkish freighter was sighted off the Turkish coast near Cape Sinope.

Main Naval D/F Station Reports:

During the afternoon 2 M.T.B.s and 1 patrol vessel were detected off the northern to central parts of the east coast and 2 minesweepers off the southern part.

No other surface vessels were detected in the evening and during the night.

Submarines detected: 2 tuned to reception in the northwestern Black Sea and 2 thought to be in the operational area. During the afternoon 1 submarine was detected returning to port about 50 miles west of Batum.

Own Situation:

Weather forecast:

SE - E winds, force 3 - 4, cloudy, fogbanks, otherwise visibility 4 - 8 miles, sea 2 - 3.

Crimea and Kerch Strait:

a. No operations last night.

Naval ferry barges at 1 hour's readiness in Kamish Burun reported nothing.

b. Land Situation:

Morning: Patrol activity in the Baksy beach-head. Lively patrol activity and fighting on the northern front.

Evening: All quiet during the day with minor exchanges of gunfire. No detailed observations could be made because of mist.

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Operations for the night of 26/27 December:

Three naval ferry barges of 1st Landing Craft Flotilla in Kamish Burun were ordered to patrol between Cape Takil and Kamish Burun from 1700 until 0500 on 27 December. For details, see relevant order dated 24 December.

The naval ferry barges were not in position until 2140 because dense fog delayed their sailing from Kamish Burun. Because of a failure in the center engine of one of the barges, there were only 2 craft in the patrol line.

Western Black Sea:

During the day the town of Kherson came under artillery and rifle fire. Otherwise no important change in the situation. During the night of 25/26 December, Ochakov reported barrage fire from Pervomeisk to Kimburn Peninsula.

Naval Port Commander, Ochakov reported that at 2320 naval gunnery lighter No. 4, which was seriously damaged by shelling, was brought to the E-boat base at Ochakov by tugs. She cannot continue to Odessa and will be unfit for further operations. Nevertheless, everything possible will be done to transfer her from Ochakov to Odessa. The transfer must take place by the middle of January 1944 because of the ice.

Having taken on fresh stores and equipment for another anti-submarine patrol, submarine chasers Nos. 103 and 106 were ordered to sail from Sevastopol at 1500 via route Green for the place where an enemy submarine was recently engaged.

The submarine chasers have been informed that the sinking of the submarine which they attacked from 20 to 23 December has not been confirmed. Nos. 2301, 2307 and 2308 which left to continue the attack on this submarine could not find the marker buoy in the mist and were unable to locate the submarine because of heavy seas. Submarine chasers Nos. 101 and 106 will keep an intensive listening watch to find out whether the submarine is still lying where she was last detected. Sound detection reports and further evidence, e.g. fresh oil patches etc., will be reported by wireless.

The boats will not return to port until they have received special orders from Admiral, Black Sea.

Submarine chasers Nos. 2301, 2307 and 2308, which put in to Eupatoria because of the weather, were ordered to carry out an anti-submarine patrol in

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the area west of Tarkhankutzki (air grid squares 2630, 2650 and 2670). They sailed at 2100.

South Coast Crimea:

Commander, 1st Landing Craft Flotilla was ordered to send naval ferry barges F 132, F 301 and F 335 to Yalta at 1600. These craft are being transferred to Kerch Strait.

The boats will patrol route Brown from Brown 2 as far as the entrance to Yalta with oropesa gear, single sweep, 10-meter pendant. If a mine is found, the place will be noted and a Most Immediate report transmitted. The boats will then continue sweeping.

At 1500 on 27 December, the boats will proceed via route Brown to Theodosia. From Yalta they will sail to Brown 13, towing the gear, then carry out a check sweep as en route to Yalta. On arrival at Theodosia, the cargo is to be immediately discharged.

The boats will await further orders from Admiral, Black Sea.

1st Landing Craft Flotilla, Kerch was informed that it is intended to send naval ferry barges F 132, F 301 and F 335 about 30 December to relieve the 3 naval ferry barges lying in Kamish Burun.

U-boat Situation:

Nothing to report.

Minesweeping Activity:

Eight boats of 3rd Motor Minesweeper Flotilla carried out minesweeping off the southwestern minofield gap at Sevastopol without result.

FZ-boats made a check sweep for standard mines in Sevastopol harbor entrance. No mines swept.

Two minesweeping planes made a check sweep for standard mines off Cape Tarkhankutzki. No mines swept.

Supply Traffic:

Convoys in the northwestern Black Sea and off the Crimean coast ran without incident, except for the Sevastopol-Odessa towed convoy which was dispersed in fog. No enemy action.

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The following vessels in the towed convoy ran aground in fog: tug "Schürmann 10" with lighter "Braila" off Eupatoria, steamer "Kimburn" and naval ferry barge F 565 off Cape Mainak (Eupatoria) and F 316 off Tarkhankutzki. All the vessels have since been refloated and have arrived in the intermediate port of Ak Mechet. No damage reported.

On 27 December a section of the convoy will continue to Odessa.

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27 December, 1943

Simferopol

Enemy Situation:

Night reconnaissance planes flying over the eastern Black Sea detected small vessels in Theodosia Bay. Exact positions were not given. Presumably this was the convoy consisting of motor vessel "Anna" and 2 escort vessels which was proceeding from Ivan Baba to Theodosia.

No reports on enemy ships in the course of daylight reconnaissance over the entire Black Sea.

At 0850 4 torpedo bombers were sighted flying towards Eupatoria Bay from the direction of Ghelenjik. The planes reported to their control station that they were flying over German ships which were presumably searching for mines. The ships in question might be the 3 submarine chasers sailing in this area and the 4 FZ-boats engaged on check sweeps there.

Main Naval D/F Station Reports:

No surface forces were detected during the afternoon.

During the evening, 1 patrol vessel and 1 motor gunboat were detected between the northern and central parts of the east coast and 4 mine-sweepers off the southern part. During the night, activity of small vessels in the northern to central Black Sea decreased. One M.T.B. was detected in the eastern Sea of Azov.

Submarines detected: 2 in the northwestern Black Sea, positions only approximate, and another off the west coast of the Crimea. During the evening, a submarine was detected in the eastern Black Sea returning to port. Another submarine was thought to be in the same area. No further details available.

Own Situation:

Weather forecast:

Ak Mechet area: NW winds, force 3 - 4; rest of Crimean coast SE - E winds, force 3 - 4.

General: Overcast, showers, visibility 6 - 10 miles, fogbanks, sea 2 - 3.

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Crimea and Kerch Strait:

- a. Last night 3 naval ferry barges on patrol in Kerch Strait between Cape Takil and Kamish Burun from 2200 until dawn sighted nothing.
- b. Naval Gunnery Detachment 613 reported moderate ferry traffic to the northern beachhead under cover of a smoke screen. Our bombers attacked ships and targets on land. Fires were observed.

Our fighters machine-gunned 2 M.T.B.s and smoke was seen to come from one of the enemy boats, which was later beached east of the southern tip of Kossa Tuszla.

c. Land Situation:

Morning: During the night, patrol activity and normal exchanges of gunfire.

Evening: Nothing to report.

There will be no operations in Kerch Strait during the coming night. Three naval ferry barges in Kamish Burun were ordered to be at 1 hour's readiness from 1600 until 0500.

Western Black Sea:

Shelling, rifle fire and machine-gunfire were reported from Kherson. A 40-ton crane and a small suction dredger were safely transferred from Kherson to Kasperovka via Lake Byoloye under heavy fire. One tug broke down with engine trouble. The crane and boats will proceed to Ochakov as soon as a tug is available.

The 150-ton crane and tug "Wachau" which ran aground off Ochakov were bombarded by mortars. Up to now, attempts to tow them off have failed.

Five submarine chasers (2 naval transports and 3 armed fishing vessels) are on anti-submarine patrol in the Tarkhankutzki area.

While the armed fishing vessels did not detect anything, submarine chaser No. 106 again located the wreck of the submarine which was sunk on 22 December. More oil was seen on the sea. This may be taken as confirmation that the submarine was sunk.

About 0800 submarine chasers Nos. 101 and 106 were attacked by enemy planes about 10 miles south of Eupatoria. No damage. Our fighters shot down 2 planes. At 1745 the same submarine

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chasers were attacked by an enemy submarine about 35 miles west of Eupatoria. Two explosions occurred about 150 or 75 meters ahead of No. 106. The submarine chaser outmaneuvered the torpedoes. No locations.

South Coast Crimea:

Naval ferry barges F 132, F 301 and F 335 swept the Sevastopol-Yalta route with oropesa gear but found no mines. They were ordered to sail from Yalta and Balaklava to be at Brown 4 at 1600 and then to proceed via route Brown to Theodosia. On passage, the boats will sweep with oropesa gear, 10-meter pendant. If mines are found, the place will be marked and a Most Immediate report transmitted. The boats will then continue passage.

At 1115 an enemy submarine attack was made on Ivan Baba harbor. Two torpedoes were fired but they ran ashore outside the E-boat harbor and failed to explode. At 1130 6 boats of 1st E-Boat Flotilla sailed on anti-submarine patrol. Depth charges were dropped twice without result.

U-boat Situation:

Nothing to report.

Minesweeping Activity:

At 0700 5 boats of 3rd Motor Minesweeper Flotilla which were operating in the southwestern minefield gap at Sevastopol had to return to port because of the weather (NE winds, force 5).

Four FZ-boats carried out check sweeps for standard mines off Cape Tarkhankutzki without result.

The minesweeping planes have now completed their operations off Cape Tarkhankutzki. Nothing further to report except a mine which was swept on 13 December about 150 meters west of Tarkhankutzki lighthouse. It may be assumed that the area is free of mines. It has been swept 24 times, which in our experience is sufficient.

Supply Traffic:

The following convoys were at sea off the west coast of the Crimea and in the western Black Sea:

- a. Towed convoy consisting of 3 tugs and a lighter, 3 motor vessels and 4 naval ferry barges with an escort of 4 submarine chasers and 1 D-boat

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proceeding from Odessa to Ak Mechet.

- b. The Sevastopol-Odessa towed convoy which was dispersed in fog off Eupatoria on 25 December sailed from Ak Mechet to Odessa at 1430.
- c. The "Prodromos", "Kassa" and "Shell I" convoy is proceeding from Constantza to Sevastopol. "Shell I" had to be taken in tow by "Rosita" because of engine failure.
- d. Four motor minesweepers, 1 submarine chaser, "Danubius" and "Geiserich" are proceeding from Sevastopol to Constantza.

All the convoys proceeded without enemy interference.

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28 December, 1943

Simferopol

Enemy Situation:

Because of the danger of icing-up, night reconnaissance planned for the northeastern Black Sea had to be canceled. No enemy shipping was detected in the course of daylight air reconnaissance in very good visibility between the central and eastern Black Sea.

Main Naval D/F Station reported continuous enemy air reconnaissance by 3 reconnaissance planes and 4 torpedo bombers over the west coast of the Crimea during the forenoon and afternoon. The planes detected two of our submarine chasers southsouthwest of Tarkhankutzki and a convoy about 13 miles southsouthwest of Cape Khersonese.

In the afternoon, Main Naval D/F Station reported no enemy naval forces except 2 submarines in unidentified positions.

During the evening, 2 minesweepers and 1 motor gunboat were detected off the southern part of the east coast and another motor gunboat off the northern part. No change as regards naval surface forces.

A radio intercept report stated that at 1655 Main Naval D/F Station obtained a bearing of 249° on a submarine. Two other submarines were detected, one 22 miles westsouthwest of Eupatoria and one between the central and eastern Black Sea.

Own Situation:

Weather forecast:

Ak Mechet and Theodosia - Kerch: NE - E winds, force 5 - 6, cloudy, visibility 6 - 10 miles, sea 4.

Yalta: E winds, force 2 - 3, cloudy, visibility 10 miles, sea 2.

Crimea and Kerch Strait:

a. The naval ferry barges which were at 1 hour's readiness from 1700 to 0500 in Kamish Burun had nothing to report.

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b. Land Situation:

Morning: Last night German and enemy patrol and assault detachments were active on the northern front, while in the Baksy beachhead there was lively enemy artillery and mortar fire.

Evening: All quiet on the northern front. Moderate artillery and mortar fire at the Baksy beachhead. Heavy raiding by enemy ground attack planes. Our raiding bombers met strong enemy fighter and anti-aircraft opposition at Kolonka.

Operations for the night of 28/29 December:

Three naval ferry barges of 1st Landing Craft Flotilla, Kerch were ordered to stand on and off in Kerch Strait between Chongelek and Kamish Burun during the coming night. They will sail from Kamish Burun at 2000, returning at 0530.

Situation and duties as in orders of 24 December.

Naval Gunnery Detachment 613 was ordered to neutralize any enemy batteries which fired on our boats.

The naval ferry barges were in position at the prescribed time. Two engines in naval ferry barge F 342 failed and she had to return to Kamish Burun. At 2345 there were only 2 naval ferry barges on patrol.

Western Black Sea:

Kherson reported moderate shelling of the town and machine-gunfire and rifle fire exchanges.

During the night it was observed in Ochakov that the Russians were directing machine-gunfire at the 150-ton crane and tug "Wachau" which ran aground off Ochakov. From 0240 to 0400, Russian searchlights lit up the jetty and the roads. An attempt was made to refloat the tug and the crane during the night of 27/28 December, but it failed because the tugs had too deep a draft, the equipment was inadequate, the Russian and Rumanian crews were not satisfactory, and the boats were frequently picked up by enemy searchlights. Enemy artillery and machine-gunfire were also encountered.

Submarine chasers Nos. 2301, 2307 and 2308, which were at sea west of Tarkhankutzki, were ordered to break off their anti-submarine patrol and put in to Ak Mechet, as it was impossible to

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use search gear in NE winds, force 5 - 6 and sea 4. At 1400 the vessels put in to Ak Mechet.

The hunt for the submarine which was attacked by submarine chasers Nos. 101 and 106 on 27 December has so far been without result. Nothing has been detected.

The 3 naval ferry barges to be transferred to Kamish Burun swept the Yalta-Theodosia route with oropesa gear, 10-meter pendant. No mines were found.

U-boat Situation:

U-boat base, Constantza reported that U 20 will be ready to put out not on 28 December, but on 30 December.

Minesweeping Activity:

Five boats of 3rd Motor Minesweeper Flotilla continued sweeping the southwestern minefield gap at Sevastopol. No mines swept. Another 5-6 days will complete the work on the southwestern minefield gap.

Five FZ-boats made check sweeps in Sevastopol Bay without result.

Supply Traffic:

- a. At 1415 "Murgescu", "Chiculescu", motor minesweeper R 197 and submarine chaser No. 2301 put in to Sevastopol with "Kassa" and "Prodromos" from the Constantza-Sevastopol convoy. Motor minesweeper R 209 and "Rosita" are still escorting steamer "Shell I" which developed engine trouble and had to be taken in tow. At 1553 "Shell I" was in air grid square 1835. Her engine is still faulty. The tow line broke several times in ENE winds, force 6 - 7, and submarine chasers Nos. 101 and 103 and "Ship 19" were sent out to assist and reinforce the escort.
- b. Submarine chasers Nos. 307 and 308, which were escorting "Störtebecker" and "Irene" from the Odessa-Ak Mechet towed convoy, part of which was dispersed in bad weather, have not yet arrived in Ak Mechet.
- c. The Ak Mechet-Odessa towed convoy entered Odessa according to plan. The "Danubius" and "Geiserich" convoy from Sevastopol arrived safely at its port of destination, Constantza.

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29 December, 1943

Simferopol

Enemy Situation:

There was no night reconnaissance because of the weather. No enemy shipping was sighted in the course of daylight air reconnaissance over the entire Black Sea.

At about 1200 1 small and 2 large vessels were reported by a reconnaissance plane about 25 miles northwest of Ak Mechet. This was probably the submarine chaser and 2 vessels which sailed from Ak Mechet to go to the assistance of motor vessel "Störtebecker" which is drifting under sail 30 miles southwest of Tarkhankutzki.

Main Naval D/F Station Reports:

Main Naval D/F Station, Eupatoria reported few detections and no exact details of positions. During the forenoon, 2 M.T.B.s and 1 motor gunboat were intercepted off the northern part of the east coast. In the evening and during the night, there was slight activity of small vessels. No change between the central and northern parts of the east coast, but 1 M.T.B. and 1 minesweeper were detected off the southern part.

Only 1 submarine was deduced to be in the operational area. Another submarine was detected returning to port, position unknown.

The assumption that there is now only 1 submarine in the northwestern Black Sea is probably not correct. The small number of bearings is more likely to be due to the fact that the boats are maintaining radio silence.

On the other hand, it may be assumed with a fair degree of certainty that, in comparison with the time when the enemy was evidently aware of our temporary plan to evacuate the Crimea, the number of enemy submarines operating against our convoys to the Crimea has considerably decreased. At that time about 8 submarines were detected each day.

Own Situation:

Weather forecast:

Entire Crimean coast: NE - E winds, force 3 - 4, in the north force 5, very cloudy, visibility

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10 - 15 miles after early morning mist, sea 2 - 3.

Crimea and Kerch Strait:

a. Nothing to report from the boats on patrol in Kerch Strait during the night of 28/29 December. The naval ferry barges entered Kamish Burun at 0530.

b. Land Situation:

Morning: During the night, only slight ineffective patrol activity by the enemy on the northern and eastern fronts.

Evening: An enemy attack carried out south of Hill 17.4 on the northern front was repulsed. The enemy also shelled the area near Hill 17.6, the main defense line in the eastern part of the Tartar Ditch and the area near Armiansk and Chulga.

At the Baksy beachhead, there was lively enemy fire from heavy artillery in the area north of Bulganak.

There will be no operations in Kerch Strait during the coming night. The naval ferry barges in Kamish Burun will be at 1 hour's readiness from 1700 to 0500 on 30 December.

Western Black Sea:

Attempts to tow off the 150-ton crane and tug "Wachau" from the western tip of Kimburn Peninsula have so far been unsuccessful. A new attempt had to be postponed because of the weather (NE winds, force 5 - 7).

At 1500 3 submarine chasers of 23rd Submarine Chaser Flotilla sailed from Ak Mechet for anti-submarine patrol in Eupatoria Bay. The boats were ordered to meet motor vessel "Irene" at 1900. "Irene" lost contact with the Odessa-Ak Mechet towed convoy.

Commander, Convoys and Escorts, Black Sea reported that submarine chaser No. 2304 had been allocated to the submarine chaser force of Admiral, Black Sea.

Naval Shore Commander, Caucasus proposed transferring naval ferry barge (mines) F 446 from Sevastopol to Theodosia to replace naval ferry barge (mines) F 445 which is lying in Theodosia waiting for repairs. After being relieved, probably on 31 December, F 445 will be transferred to Sevastopol for repairs.

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Minefield charts captured from Russian vessels, which we shot apart at Eltigen, show that there are several small enemy minefields between Brown 17 and Red 17. The route to Kerch must be kept open for our own traffic and it will be necessary to check the route and sweep any mines found there.

Naval ferry barges F 301, F 132, F 335, which sailed from Theodosia at 1400 to relieve the boats lying in Kamish Burun, were ordered to sweep the route from Theodosia to Chongelek with oropesa gear, 5-meter pendant, in open formation. The channel between the approach buoy for Kerch Strait and Cape Takil is to be swept twice in both directions. The boats will navigate to the precise boundaries of the channel. If mines are discovered, the place should be marked, the depth setting of the mines ascertained if possible, and a Most Immediate report transmitted. After carrying out this operation, the boats will enter Kamish Burun where the naval ferry barges will be under the command of Admiral, Black Sea for operations in Kerch Strait.

As the E-boat operation off the north Caucasus coast during the night of 24/25 December had to be abandoned about 1800 because of bad weather (NNE winds, force 5), I have decided to repeat the operation tonight, when the weather will be favorable for E-boats.

Four boats of 1st E-Boat Flotilla were ordered to sail from Ivan Baba at 1500. At 0300 the boats will wait close to the coast between Cape Utrich and Utrich Nok.

Operational orders will be as for 24/25 December including the surprise shelling of the port of Anapa.

1st Air Corps has been requested to provide night reconnaissance planes to cover the sound of the E-boats' approach to Anapa and to drop flares over the target.

U-boat Situation:

No enemy shipping was sighted by U 19 in the operational area off Ochomchiri or by U 23 in the operational area off Poti.

Minesweeping Activity:

Five boats of 3rd Motor Minesweeper Flotilla swept the southwestern minefield gap at Sevastopol. No mines swept.

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Six FZ-boats made a check sweep for ground mines off the entrance to Sevastopol. No mines were swept in 24 sweeps.

Supply Traffic:

Parts of the towed convoys, which have been proceeding close to the Crimean coast on the last few days, entered their ports of destination.

Motor vessel "Störtebecker", belonging to the Odessa-Ak Mechet towed convoy, is drifting under sail about 30 miles southwest of Tarkhankutzki and has not yet put in to port. Three submarine chasers have been ordered to go to her assistance. Nothing to report from the other convoys.

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30 December, 1943

Simferopol

Enemy Situation:

Only a few vessels were sighted by night reconnaissance over the northeastern Black Sea and west of the Crimea.

During the day no enemy shipping was detected in the central and western Black Sea.

A Turkish freighter was sighted close to the Turkish coast near Samsun.

Main Naval D/F Station Reports:

At noon, Main Naval D/F Station located a mine-sweeper off the southern part of the east coast. During the evening, 2 more minesweepers were detected in the same area. Apart from the movements of these ships which continued during the night, there was nothing to report.

As the enemy submarines are maintaining radio silence, only 1 submarine was located, about 30 miles northeast of Constantza. It is assumed that there is another submarine in the Eupatoria-Tarkhankutzki operational area.

Own Situation:

Weather forecast:

E winds, force 3 - 4, mainly overcast, light showers, visibility 4 - 8 miles, sea 2 - 3.

During the second half of the night SW - W winds, force 6 - 7 generally.

Crimea and Kerch Strait:

- a. Three naval ferry barges which are on transfer to Kamish Burun swept the Theodosia-Kerch route with oroposa gear. No mines swept. At 0150 a naval ferry barge had an engagement with an enemy motor gunboat which escaped in fog. Hits were observed. Our boats returned safely to Kamish Burun. From 1100 - 1400, Kamish Burun was shelled by 11 enemy guns of medium and heavy caliber on Capo Tuszla. Naval ferry barges were damaged by splinters and 4 men were injured.

Kamish Burun was again shelled between 2000 and 2200.

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4th Battery, Naval Gunnery Detachment 613 damaged an enemy vessel which had to be taken in tow.

It is striking that the enemy immediately discovered that there were more ships in port at Kamish Burun when the relief boats for the naval ferry barges awaiting repair arrived and therefore shelled the base. There were no air raids, probably because of the accurate anti-aircraft fire. It will therefore not be possible, so long as naval ferry barges are based in Kamish Burun, to withdraw the anti-aircraft guns as planned by 9th Anti-Aircraft Division. 9th Anti-Aircraft Division was informed accordingly and has agreed with Admiral, Black Sea.

b. Land Situation:

Morning: No important activity on the fronts. An enemy patrol was repulsed at the Baksy beachhead and naval patrols were driven off northwest of Martini Peninsula.

Evening: Strong enemy artillery fire at the Baksy beachhead, rising to an intense barrage at times. All quiet on the northern front.

Operations for the night of 30/31 December:

Naval ferry barges F 342, F 401 and F 578 of 1st Landing Craft Flotilla, Kerch were ordered to sail at 1700 for the patrol line between Chongelek and Kamish Burun. Their task will be to attack enemy forces and prevent landings. If the enemy is sighted a Most Immediate report is to be transmitted.

The boats will return to Theodosia from the patrol line. On return passage, they will pass the approach buoy at Kerch Strait at 0200, proceed via route Brown, keeping strictly within the fairway because of the danger of mines and avoiding the short cut off Cape Takil.

In Theodosia the naval ferry barges will still be under the direct command of Admiral, Black Sea. (See War Diary 25 December, paras. a. and b.)

Western Black Sea:

Kherson reported artillery exchanges and machine-gunfire. Otherwise no change. In the Ochakov sector, artillery and mortar fire exchanges between Poryvomeisk and Kimburn.

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The guns of naval gunnery lighter No. 4 which was towed from Pervomeisk to Ochakov have been removed and loaded into a lighter for transfer to Odessa. Naval gunnery lighter No. 4 is being temporarily caulked for transfer to Odessa.

At 1130 submarine chasers Nos. 2301, 2307 and 2308 put in to Sevastopol to take in new equipment and fuel for anti-submarine patrol.

Last night 1st E-Boat Flotilla was in lurking position off Cape Utrich 1.8 miles from the coast from 1855 to 2315. No enemy shipping was observed. At crawling speed close to the coast the boats proceeded to 1,500 meters north of the port of Anapa. After our night reconnaissance planes had dropped flares, the E-boats reported that the port and roads were empty. Even at the mole there were no ships to be seen. The port was therefore not bombarded. At 0245 the boats commenced return passage and put in to Ivan Baba at 0545.

U-boat Situation:

U-boat base, Constantza reported that the firing rod of one of U 20's torpedo tubes was broken and that sailing had to be postponed until 1 January.

Minesweeping Activity:

At 0600 5 motor minesweepers of 3rd Motor Minesweeper Flotilla sailed from Sevastopol to sweep the southwestern minefield gap. From 1000, there were only 3 boats sweeping, as 2 boats had been detailed to assist motor vessel "Störtebecker" which was drifting 50 miles southwest of Tarkhankutzi. No mines swept. Three-quarters of the task has been completed.

FZ-boats made a check sweep for standard mines on route Green off Sevastopol harbor entrance as far as the 30-meter line. Sixteen strips 300 meters wide were swept without result.

Supply Traffic:

- a. Steamer "Shell I" put in to Constantza towed by submarine chaser No. 106. She was one of the ships belonging to the Crimea convoys which were dispersed in bad weather a few days ago. Motor vessel "Störtebecker" is proceeding to Sevastopol towed by motor minesweeper R 208 and will presumably put in there at 0600.

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- b. Three more convoys and 1 towed convoy off the west coast of the Crimea ran as scheduled without enemy interference.

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31 December, 1943

Simferopol

Enemy Situation:

During the night, reconnaissance was flown over the Black Sea as far as Sochi without sighting the enemy. No enemy shipping was detected in the course of daylight air reconnaissance over the entire Black Sea. One Turkish freighter was sighted off Cape Bafra in Turkish territorial waters. Ferry traffic was observed in Kerch Strait off Cape Chroni.

Main Naval D/F Station Reports:

No activity of surface forces could be detected from fleet radio traffic which began in the evening. Apart from 1 minesweeper off the east coast of the Black Sea, nothing was detected.

No important radar bearings were taken by Main Naval D/F Station. One submarine was detected in the northwestern Black Sea and another is assumed to be off the west coast of the Crimea. One submarine is thought to be returning to port, position unknown.

Own Situation:

Weather forecast:

W - NW winds, force 5 - 6, squally, cloudy at times, showers, otherwise visibility 15 miles, sea 4 - 5.

Crimea and Kerch Strait:

- a. The attention of Naval Shore Commanders, Crimea and Caucasus, Commander, Convoys and Escorts, Black Sea, 1st E-Boat Flotilla, 3rd Motor Minesweeper Flotilla and 1st Landing Craft Flotilla, Kerch has again been drawn to the fact that there must be absolutely no relaxation of watchfulness or operational readiness during the New Year days. It is on critical days such as these that increased attention is required.
- b. Our patrols in Kerch Strait did not encounter the enemy. As bad weather is forecast for the entire Crimean coast in the second half of the night (SW to W winds, towards morning W to NW winds, force 6 - 7), the naval ferry barges received orders at 2300 to abandon operations immediately and return to Kamish Burun instead of Theodosia.

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c. Land Situation:

Morning: Enemy patrol activity on both fronts. Strong enemy forces entrenched on the Baksy front. The enemy is probably expecting a German attack. The reason for the increased ferry traffic across Kerch Strait is probably because the enemy is building up stocks before the Strait freezes.

A large-scale operation against partisans in the Jaila mountains restricted the partisans to the forest south of Baksan. Little resistance was encountered.

Evening: Enemy patrols were repulsed on the northern front. Artillery fire slight generally, strong locally. Otherwise nothing to report.

- d. The port of Kamish Burun and the batteries of Naval Gunnery Detachment 613 were shelled several times from Cape Tuszla, the fish-salting factory and Panaghia.

Operations for the night of 31 December/1 January:

As special watchfulness is required on New Year's night, 1st Landing Craft Flotilla, Kerch has been ordered to patrol in Kerch Strait during the whole night. At 2000 3 naval ferry barges will sail from Kamish Burun and will stand on and off between Chongelek and Kamish Burun until dawn.

Task: To attack enemy forces and prevent landing operations. If the enemy is sighted a Most Immediate report should be transmitted.

The naval ferry barges sailed for the patrol line at the prescribed time. At 2250 they were shelled by the Tuszla batteries and caught in searchlights operated at Taman. At the same time a noise of engines was heard at sea, but nothing was picked up by the searchlights of Naval Gunnery Detachment 613.

Western Black Sea:

NW winds, force 5 - 6, increasing in squalls.

Naval Port Commander, Nikolaiev was ordered to do everything possible to salvage the 150-ton crane which had run aground off Kimburn point. The water may be deeper in this weather. The buoyancy of the crane and the damage inflicted by artillery will have to be examined and reported. The crane is not to be blown up yet, as the enemy is still not in a position to salvage it, and there is also a possibility that we may be able to salvage the crane later.

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Four out of 5 naval ferry barges proceeding from Sevastopol to Ak Mechet had to put in to Eupatoria because of the weather (W winds, force 7). The fifth ferry barge - F 562 - ran aground off Belyaus. Tug "Theben" and submarine chasers Nos. 304 and 305 went to her assistance from Eupatoria. The search had to be abandoned as the ferry barge could not be found in the darkness. The search will continue at daybreak.

Two submarine chasers, D 9, "Orion", "Lobau" and "Evertje" of the Ak Mechet-Sevastopol towed convoy put in to Eupatoria. D 9 ran aground between Eupatoria and Mainak. The rest of the towed convoy, consisting of "Budapest", 2 tugs with lighters and 2 submarine chasers is proceeding to Sevastopol. Up to now it has not been possible to refloat D 9 because of the weather.

At 0215 4 naval ferry barges put in to Sevastopol from Ak Mechet. In this convoy naval ferry barge F 316 ran aground in the north bay. At 0800 she was towed off. As she had sprung a leak, she was taken to the slipway.

Motor vessel "Störtebecker", which was towed in on 30 December by motor minesweeper R 208, anchored in Suchaya Bay. At 2300 "Störtebecker" was drifting with her anchor in a westerly gale. R 208 went to her aid and both boats ran aground on the north shore of the bay. R 208 is fast between large rocks, compartments 3 and 4 are flooded. Salvage attempts will be made immediately.

At 1000 "Störtebecker" was refloated and towed in. Minor damage only. Although R 208 has been lightened, attempts at refloating have so far proved unsuccessful. She is being continually driven against the rocks and is heavily damaged.

U-boat Situation:

Nothing to report.

Minesweeping Activity:

There was no minesweeping because of the weather. (W winds, force 5 - 6.)

Supply Traffic:

- a. Convoys were seriously delayed by the gale which rose at midnight. Ships could not be saved from running aground because when the gale warnings were transmitted all the convoys were at sea.

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b. During December 1943, 33,853 tons of supplies were sent to the Crimea. The actual amount brought over was 11,147 tons short of the target figure of 45,000 tons. The principal reason for this was the bad use which the Army made of the shipping placed at its disposal. 17th Army H.Q. has been asked to remedy this (see War Diary 21 December, section b.).

(Signed) Brinkmann.

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Survey for December 1943

A. Enemy operations:

1. Submarine attacks:

- | | |
|---------------------------------|------|
| a. With guns | None |
| b. With torpedoes | 7 |
| c. On naval shore installations | 1 |

2. Attacks by surface forces: None

3. Air raids:

- | | |
|-----------------------------------------------|---------------------------|
| a. On naval shore installations
and ports: | 9 attacks
(74 planes) |
| b. On vessels: | 14 attacks
(62 planes) |

4. Planes shot down:

- | | |
|----------------------------------|---|
| a. By naval shore batteries: | 3 |
| b. By ship's anti-aircraft guns: | 1 |

B. Own operations:

1. Submarine chasers:

12 submarine chasers. 1 submarine sunk for certain, another probably sunk.

2. Motor minesweepers:

5 motor minesweepers in 26 patrol lines in 6 days' operations. No successes.

6 motor minesweepers on minesweeping operations in 12 days' operations. No mines swept.

3. E-boats:

6 E-boats each of which carried out 6 offensive operations against the Caucasus coast. No successes.

5 E-boats in 7 patrol lines in 2 days. No successes.

4. Naval ferry barges:

9 ferry barges in 73 operations on 18 days.
2 gunboats, 1 tug, 1 lighter, 2 fishing smacks,
1 barge, 2 rafts and 11 landing craft sunk with
the cooperation of shore batteries.

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1 gunboat, 1 landing craft damaged. 18 prisoners of war.

5. U-boats:

4 U-boats, 55 days at sea. No successes.

C. Own losses:

1. Total losses:

- a. Naval forces: 5 naval ferry barges
1 submarine chaser
1 harbor defense boat.
 - b. Steamers: None.
 - c. Tugs, lighters etc.: 2 lighters of 1,350 tons.
2. Damaged: None.

D. Mines:

- 1. Swept or destroyed by gunfire: 2 standard mines.
- 2. Mines laid: 1 minefield of 58 mines.

E. Supply Traffic:

- 1. Naval vessels escorted: 7.
- 2. Merchant ships:
 - a. In convoy: 182 vessels totaling
173,286 G.R.T.
 - b. Unescorted: 9 vessels totaling
1,896 G.R.T.
 - c. 98 naval ferry barges totaling 9,800 G.R.T.

For activity report 1943, Admiral, Black Sea, see Appendix.

(Signed) Brinkmann.

APPENDIX I

Activity Report 1943, Admiral, Black Sea

I. General review:

The predominant feature of 1942 was the extension of the territory under our control and the consequent building up of naval forces, reconstruction of newly captured bases and erection of gun batteries to defend our occupied coastline. In 1943, however, the conduct of the war under command of Admiral, Black Sea was dictated by the withdrawal of the Army fronts. The duties arising from this comprised patrols, evacuation and convoying. The principle behind such duties was in all cases, even in offensive operations, to support the Army.

1st Period: January - March: Withdrawal of the Caucasus frontlines to the Gotenkopf position and the defense line east of Taganrog.

2nd Period: April - August: Defense of the Gotenkopf bridgehead and the Taganrog line.

3rd Period: September - October: Withdrawal from the Gotenkopf bridgehead and from the north coast of the Sea of Azov to the Dnieper.

4th Period: November - December: Defense of the isolated fortress of the Crimea.

During these periods Admiral, Black Sea worked in close cooperation with Army Group A and 17th Army H.Q. with the object of giving the Army full support. The following is a more detailed report on these periods:

Period 1

After the loss of Rostov, our troops returning from the Caucasus front had to be transported across Korch Strait to the Crimea. The Army retained a bridgehead covering Taman Peninsula and adjacent territory and extending along a line Novorossisk-Krimskaya-Temriuk. This bridgehead served to assemble the troops and concentrate the material to be withdrawn. The withdrawal across Korch Strait commenced at the end of January when the ice melted. The first duty of Admiral, Black Sea was to make an adequately marked channel through the minefields and then to ferry the Army across in cooperation with the combined operations boats.

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In an all-out operation lasting until the end of March, we succeeded in ferrying over all the troops and supplies not required for the defense of the Kuban bridgehead, which was firmly held in the face of strong enemy counter-action - especially from the air. An enemy landing attempt in the rear of our own frontline near Oseraika valley, northwest of Novorossisk, failed. The enemy did however succeed in establishing a beachhead in Novorossisk Bay and extending it to reach the open sea beyond the bay. Sea supplies to this beachhead at Myshako were repeatedly and successfully attacked by our E-boats. The landing places were effectively bombarded by our E-boats and motor minesweepers, and vessels lying at jetties were torpedoed by E-boats.

Five shallow minefields were laid in the southern part of Kerch Strait to protect our ferry traffic against enemy surface forces. Enemy planes attempted to stop the ferry traffic by laying mines (standard mines, ground mines and horned moored mines) in Kerch Strait. Continuous check sweeps of the channels prevented large-scale losses.

By the end of March, the evacuation from the Gotenkopf bridgehead was completed. The following had been ferried across in naval vessels and combined operations boats:

- 105,000 men
- 45,000 horses
- 7,000 motor vehicles
- 12,000 horse-drawn vehicles.

Period 2

At the beginning of March, the Gotenkopf bridgehead was firmly in our hands and the forces of 17th Army H.Q. required a continuous stream of supplies. At first Army Group A asked for a daily turnover of 1,500 tons, but then raised their demands to 2,500 tons a day and from July to 4,000 tons a day. In order to relieve the embarkation points on the eastern shore of Kerch Strait (Taman, Senaya, fish-packing plant) and also to save motor vehicles and fuel, it became necessary to sail convoys as close to our frontlines as possible. In the face of considerable danger, especially on the route to Anapa, which was exposed to the attacks of superior naval surface forces, and which was only 45 miles away from the nearest enemy base (Ghelenjik), despite numerous air raids, submarine attacks and repeated minelaying in the convoy channels, our convoys kept up a full stream of supplies until the Kuban bridgehead was evacuated. On the particularly dangerous Kerch-Anapa route, naval ferry barges made 191 crossings, carrying 61,717 tons.

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Ferry traffic in Kerch Strait was especially vulnerable to air attack. Considerable numbers of enemy planes carried out attacks practically every day against transports and landing places in an effort to bring traffic to a standstill. Russian planes laid ELM mines with induction firing and moored mines, thus forcing our ships to keep to certain channels which had to be swept continuously.

After reoccupying the ports of Yeisk and Akhtari, the enemy brought heavily armed, fast motor gunboats into the Sea of Azov for the purpose of striking at our supplies from Kerch and Genichesk to Temriuk. To eliminate this danger at the source, our own forces of naval gunnery lighters, motor minesweepers and motor minesweepers (RA) made repeated attacks on the enemy bases at Akhtari, Yeisk and Achuevski. These attacks were effective.

1st E-Boat Flotilla and 3rd Motor Minesweeper Flotilla carried out many successful operations against enemy shipping going to the Myshako beachhead. While the unsuccessful fighting to mop up the beachhead was going on during April, our boats sank 15 boats, 3 coastal freighters of 750 tons, 3 lighters and 2 ammunition barges off Myshako, thereby considerably relieving the pressure on the Army.

Naval gunnery lighters and naval ferry barges patrolled outside Temriuk Bay and along the northern coast of the Taman Peninsula, repeatedly driving off enemy ships which approached our coast.

Everything possible was done in the way of transportation and defense of the shipping lanes to ensure that the monthly supplies of Army Group were safely brought across the sea. From March until the withdrawal from the Kuban bridgehead, the target figure for convoy supplies was reached and at times exceeded.

From March to August, the following were carried by the Navy from Kerch, Genichesk and Theodosia to Taman, Senaya, Anapa and Temriuk:

Stores	337,353 tons
Personnel	6,365
Horses	2,566
Motor vehicles	1,099
Horse-drawn vehicles	534
Guns	197

Apart from these convoys which ran to the Kuban bridgehead, once the ice melted in Taganrog Bay supplies were also sent by sea from Mariupol to Taganrog for the extreme right flank of the Army. These convoys, which were kept up until the evacuation of Taganrog in mid-August, delivered a total of 29,449 tons of supplies.

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In June naval gunnery lighters and naval ferry barges were transferred from Mariupol to Taganrog for the defense of the northern shore of Taganrog Bay. Enemy landings on our own weakly occupied shore in the rear of the frontline were prevented by continuous patrols and by the bombardment of the Russian base of Yeisk. Naval gunnery lighters relieved the pressure on our troops by bombarding the enemy front in the inner part of Taganrog Bay.

Period 3

On 7 September, the evacuation of the Kuban bridgehead began. With strong naval protection of the flanks in the Sea of Azov and the Black Sea, withdrawals were carried out according to plan. Enemy landings in the rear of our frontlines were all frustrated. About 400 men landed on the north Taman coast but were soon annihilated by the Army.

On 9 October, the last troops were ferried over from Kossa Chushka. Not a single man was left behind. All valuable material was evacuated. In 34 days naval ships and combined operations boats carried the following men and material from the Kuban bridgehead:

Personnel	202,447
Horses	54,664
Cattle	6,019
Motor vehicles	15,237
Horse-drawn vehicles	20,600
Guns	1,196
Service supplies	94,937 tons.

This evacuation by sea, successfully carried out without large losses, was completed by the withdrawal of about 240 vessels engaged in the operation through Kerch Strait to Sevastopol. On 10 October, the vessels entered Sevastopol in 3 large convoys, escorted by all available U-boats, E-boats, naval gunnery lighters and motor minesweepers. Despite continuous air raids and one submarine attack, only 1 naval ferry barge and 1 combined operations ferry were lost.

At the same time as the evacuation of the Kuban bridgehead, the withdrawal of our front on the northern shore of the Sea of Azov began. Until the evacuation of Genichesk, naval gunnery lighters and naval ferry barges acted as a cover for the Army withdrawal. They repeatedly bombarded the advanced enemy frontline and shelled enemy rear concentrations.

Period 4

By the end of October, communications between the Crimea and the mainland were cut. The enemy attempted to capture the Crimea quickly by launching

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a concentrated offensive on the Perekop isthmus and simultaneous landings north and south of Kerch. In addition to Naval Gunnery Detachment 614 and the units of Naval Port Commanders in the northern Azov ports, all available naval shore detachments were withdrawn and detailed to support the Army.

The main task for units afloat was to prevent further landings of reinforcements at the Baksy beachhead north of Kerch and the Eltigen beachhead south of Kerch. In the northern part of Kerch Strait this could only be done in the first days following the landing. When the enemy installed heavy artillery sites and searchlights on Kossa Chushka, it became impossible for our naval ferry barges and motor minesweepers to operate in the northern entrance to Kerch Strait which is only 5,000 meters wide. Full-scale minelaying was undertaken by our naval ferry barges, which suffered losses in an effort to disrupt the enemy ferry traffic. Prisoners' statements confirm that the enemy has lost ships as a result of our minelaying.

All-out operations by our naval ferry barges, motor minesweepers and E-boats succeeded in blockading the Eltigen beachhead almost completely during the hours of darkness. For 5 weeks our patrols repulsed all enemy attempts to run the blockade. The enemy was prevented by our shore batteries from bringing supplies by sea during daylight and was therefore driven to make the attempt during the long nights. Our blockade paved the way for mopping up this beachhead, which was a serious threat to the Kerch-Theodosia supply route and consequently to Kerch and, ultimately, to Kerch Peninsula itself. On 4 December, the Army was able to commence their successful attack on an enemy handicapped by shortage of supplies. In the course of the blockade of the Eltigen beachhead and the sealing off of the enemy forces which broke out from the beachhead to the north and attempted to establish a new position on Mitridat Hill south of Kerch, our naval ferry barges, motor minesweepers and E-boats in Kerch Strait sank the following vessels in numerous actions:

- 8 motor gunboats
- 2 M.T.B.s
- 27 landing craft
- 2 tugs
- 2 lighters
- 12 other vessels.

The following were damaged:

- 12 motor gunboats
- 2 M.T.B.s
- 7 landing craft
- 1 lighter.

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The majority of the vessels carried soldiers and material. The losses suffered by the enemy were therefore important.

Repeated bombardment of landing places at Eltigen was carried out, thus destroying many vessels and preventing the enemy from escaping across the sea. When the beachhead had been recaptured, the following boats were found on the shore:

3 motor gunboats
24 landing craft
4 harbor picket boats
28 launches and cutters.

Thus a total of 96 vessels was destroyed and 20 vessels were damaged.

The following vessels took part in the blockade of the beachhead:

31 naval ferry barges in 245 operations on 29 days	
6 motor minesweepers in 50 operations on 14 days	
5 E-boats in 60 operations on 17 days	
<u>Total</u>	<u>355 operations</u>

Our own losses amounted to 8 naval ferry barges. Two of these ran aground and the rest were sunk by mines or destroyed in air raids. Fourteen naval ferry barges and 3 motor minesweepers were damaged in gun actions and air raids.

After the capture of the Eltigen beachhead our naval ferry barges maintained further defensive patrols at night in the southern part of Kerch Strait.

Next to defense measures, the principal task of the Navy is to bring supplies across the sea to the Crimean outpost. All available naval forces are now being used as direct and indirect escorts of transports. The principal task of these forces is to drive off attacking planes and engage enemy submarines.

II. Offensive Naval Warfare in 1943

In addition to the above-mentioned transport and escort duties in the interests of the Army, Admiral, Black Sea deemed it important to employ all suitable naval forces in offensive operations against the Russian naval forces and merchant fleet at sea and in ports within our range. E-boats and U-boats under the direct command of Admiral, Black Sea were almost exclusively employed on continuous operations for this purpose. Motor minesweepers and naval gunnery lighters were employed on offensive operations when the opportunity arose. Particularly as a result of our E-boat and U-boat operations off the Caucasus coast the enemy has suffered heavy shipping losses,

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and a large-scale landing in the Crimea is now, if not entirely out of the question, at any rate much less likely, because the tonnage will not be available.

The enemy also suffered important losses of material, especially equipment bound for the Kuban front. Hence the pressure on the Army, engaged in heavy fighting, was considerably relieved.

In the fighting for the Myshako beachhead, E-boats and motor minesweepers were repeatedly successful in attacks on shipping making for the beachhead. Our boats also shelled vessels at the landing stages and destroyed piles of material on the beach.

In the course of numerous offensive operations by our motor minesweepers and naval gunnery lighters in the Sea of Azov, the enemy suffered considerable losses. The harbors of Akhtari, Yeisk and Achuevski were attacked and the enemy was obliged to call in troops originally intended for fighting at the front to defend these harbors.

The reluctance of the enemy to use their fleet is primarily due to the offensive operations of our naval forces. The Russians are not willing to expose their ships to the danger of attack from our U-boats and E-boats. Hence the desired effect has been achieved, not to mention the successes in sinking enemy ships.

Details of our own offensive naval operations are as follows:

a. 1st E-Boat Flotilla:

88 operations against enemy shipping off the Caucasus coast, 3 minelaying operations off the Caucasus coast, 50 operations in the defense of German-occupied coasts and the southern entrance to Kerch Strait and to protect our convoys, 24 anti-landing operations in Kerch Strait and the Sea of Azov.

Thus the boats of 1st E-Boat Flotilla were out on operations on 165 days of the year. In these operations they sank the following vessels:

1 torpedoboat	
1 M.T.B.	
3 motor gunboats	
3 landing craft	
1 tanker	7,000 G.R.T.
3 freighters totaling	5,700 G.R.T.
19 coastal freighters totaling	8,100 G.R.T.
15 lighters totaling	8,200 G.R.T.
Total	29,000 G.R.T.

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b. 30th U-boat Flotilla:

Throughout the year, the flotilla operated for the most part in the waters off the Caucasus coast concentrating in the southeastern Black Sea, that is in the area beyond the range of our E-boats.

In a total of 30 operations, the boats were at sea 792 days covering 71,636 miles. They sank 12 vessels, totaling 29,300 G.R.T., with 63 torpedoes.

Further sinkings: 1 submarine chaser
1 escort vessel (800 tons)
1 patrol boat (100 tons)
1 Q-ship (800 tons).

Prisoners stated that the minefield of TMB mines laid off Poti caused the loss of 2 steamers.

In judging these achievements, the reluctance of the Soviet Fleet to put to sea should also be taken into consideration. After large steamers had been lost, enemy convoys of small ships - mostly coastal freighters and lighters - took to sailing close to the Caucasus coast. The shallow draft of these boats did not make them good targets for torpedo attacks.

c. Naval Gunnery Lighters and Motor Minesweepers:

18 offensive operations in the Sea of Azov against enemy ports and Army frontlines. Six attacks were made on Primorsko Akhtari, 2 on Yeisk and 2 on Achuevski.

The following vessels were sunk in these operations:

6 motor gunboats and
5 patrol boats.

One armored train was shot up, and some large fires were started in enemy ports and assembly points as a result of our shelling.

In operations against the Myshako beachhead, the motor minesweepers sank 2 enemy M.T.B.s and effectively shelled landing stages and vessels.

III. Convoys:

Apart from the shipping to and from the Kuban bridgehead and in the Sea of Azov, carrying supplies and eventually taking part in the evacuation, convoys sailed to the Crimea at maximum strength the whole year through and shipping plied along the west coast from Nikolaiev to the Bosphorus. Because of the threat of enemy air raids and the serious danger of

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submarines and mines to shipping, all ships had to sail in strongly escorted convoys, keeping to the official swept channels. German motor minesweepers, submarine chasers (armed fishing vessels and naval transports), naval ferry barges and boats of the escort flotillas and Rumanian destroyers, torpedo-boats and gunboats acted as escorts and patrol vessels. The bad weather in the Black Sea made extremely exacting demands on the small vessels on escort duty.

During 1943, 2,030 ships totaling 1,340,469 G.R.T. were escorted in the Black Sea.

Anti-submarine Operations:

Although the need for systematic anti-submarine measures was clearly recognized - especially as the submarine menace became a very serious problem when the Crimea was thrown back on the sea routes for its entire supplies - the shortage of suitable submarine chasers meant that only limited anti-submarine operations could be carried out. Until the middle of the year, Admiral, Black Sea had only 2 ships equipped with acoustic gear. From the middle of the year more and more armed fishing vessels and submarine chasers (naval transports) were commissioned and first employed as anti-submarine escorts for convoys. As more of these ships were available, they were assembled and employed on systematic submarine patrol in the waters where enemy submarines were concentrated. As a result, 1 submarine was sunk in November, and 2 sunk and 2 more probably damaged in December. A total of 5 enemy submarines was sunk in 1943.

Minelaying Operations:

- a. In order to protect our shipping lanes off the west coast of the Crimea, plans were made to lay minefields between Cape Khersonese and Cape St. George. Because of the shortage of mines, so far only 3 minefields, comprising 726 moored mines, have been laid in the east.
- b. Three new minefields have been added to the minefields laid in 1941 for the protection of Constantza because the former minefields had been thinned out by rough seas and ice and were no longer effective.
- c. Five deep minefields were laid in and near our own shipping lanes off Sulina, the Bosphorus and in Eupatoria Bay, that is in waters where enemy submarine operations are concentrated.
- d. Throughout the year, Korch Strait was an important center of minelaying activity to prevent enemy surface forces from entering the Strait. Twenty

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minefields containing 1,542 moored mines and 306 non-contact mines were laid off the southern and northern entrances, and, after the evacuation of the Gotenkopf bridgehead, inside Kerch Strait itself, as a precaution against enemy landings.

- e. Seven minefields containing 904 moored mines were laid as an anti-landing measure along our own coastline. A total of 904 moored mines was laid in places considered likely points for enemy landings, that is north and south of the bottleneck in the bays of Theodosia, Koktebel, Kasantip and Arabatz.
- f. Six offensive minefields were laid in the Sea of Azov off Akhtari and Yeisk and off the Caucasus coast near Novorossisk and Poti.
- g. Non-contact mines were laid prior to evacuation in the ports of Novorossisk, Anapa, Mariupol, Temriuk and Berdyansk.

In 1943, 50 minefields containing 4,776 mines and 1,119 explosive floats i.e. a total of 5,895 mines and floats were laid in the Black Sea and in the Sea of Azov.

The Rumanian minelayers "Murgescu" and "Dacia", minelayer "Romania", naval ferry barges, motor minesweepers, E-boats and U-boats took part in these operations.

IV. Minesweeping Activity:

When not required for convoy duties or offensive operations, the minesweeping flotillas concentrated on carrying out check sweeps in our shipping lanes near the Crimea, in Kerch Strait and off the west coast, and on sweeping minefields discovered in these channels. Kerch Strait was the center of mine-sweeping activity. Here the enemy dropped ELM/J mines and moored mines from planes to cut off our supplies to the Kuban bridgehead. Because of repeated minelaying in the shipping lanes to Anapa, it became necessary for our naval ferry barge convoys to sail with anti-mine escort. These tasks made heavy demands on the crews in areas where there was a great danger of air attacks.

As small minefields which had been laid by submarines off the Crimea and off the west coast were continually being discovered, all convoys were provided with anti-mine escort. In order to make a short cut in the Sevastopol-Constantza route and to sail convoys on different routes as much as possible, a northwestern gap was swept through the Russian danger area off Sevastopol. Sweeping of a southwestern gap was commenced in December.

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The mines which were swept in our shipping lanes near the Crimea and the west coast confirmed that the enemy also used submarines for minelaying.

The Russians have certainly made important progress in submarine training in the past year. Some of the numerous attacks on our convoys have demonstrated good leadership. Enemy submarines, which are still strong in numbers, will therefore be a growing danger to our shipping.

During 1943, 82 submarine attacks were made on our convoys and naval vessels, causing the loss of

4 naval ferry barges	
5 steamers totaling	20,064 G.R.T.
1 lighter of	500 G.R.T.
	<u>20,564 G.R.T.</u>

c. Air Force:

Enemy planes were extremely active throughout the year. Possessing superiority in numbers, the enemy was able to carry out continuous reconnaissance of our bases and of every mile of the waters in the northwestern Black Sea and along the coast of the Crimea. Hence the enemy was always well informed on German shipping movements and on the number of ships in port, and was in a position to make bombing raids from their favorably placed air bases at the right time. Daily attacks on our convoys and naval ferry barges off the Crimean coast and between Sevastopol and Odessa compelled us to sail convoys at night in stages. The loss of time had to be accepted.

The torpedo bombers which with bomber formations have recently been raiding our convoys in a pincer attack constitute a special threat to our convoys in the northwestern Black Sea. This danger has become even greater now that the enemy possesses airfields much nearer our convoy routes following the reoccupation of the territory north of the Crimea.

During 1943, 311 air attacks were made on convoys and formations at sea, while ports were raided 959 times.

In these attacks, the enemy destroyed:

13 naval ferry barges	
2 motor minesweepers	
1 E-boat	
8 harbor defense boats	
1 tug	
3 steamers totaling	8,950 G.R.T.
8 lighters totaling	5,600 G.R.T.
	<u>14,550 G.R.T.</u>

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Our naval forces shot down	52 planes
Our naval shore detachments shot down	39 planes
Total	<u>91 planes</u>

d. Enemy Minelaying Activity:

Planes, submarines and, to a lesser degree, small vessels were engaged on enemy minelaying operations.

The centers of this activity were Kerch Strait, where the enemy attempted to cut off our supplies to the Kuban bridgehead, off the south coast of the Taman Peninsula, to interrupt the most important route to Anapa, close to the Crimean coast and off the west coast between Constantza and Bugaz. No large offensive minefields have been discovered. Planes laid standard mines (ground mines) and moored mines and, as far as is known, submarines and surface vessels laid inertia-contact mines and horned mines.

The following losses were sustained in 1943 to enemy mines:

13 naval ferry barges	
1 E-boat	
5 tugs	
1 steamer	1,736 G.R.T.
1 motor vessel	500 G.R.T.
5 lighters	<u>3,500 G.R.T.</u>
	5,736 G.R.T.

e. Summary:

During 1943 the Russian Fleet in no way seized the opportunities afforded by its superiority in numbers. It is not known whether, for political reasons, the Russians prefer the presence of a dominant fleet in the Black Sea to possible successes in naval warfare, and are therefore not prepared to take the risk of operations, or whether material defects in the ships are responsible for their staying in port, or whether the presence of our U-boats and E-boats deterred them. It is assumed that the inactivity of the Russian Fleet may be partly explained by all three reasons.

VII. Survey for 1943

1. The following enemy vessels were sunk or destroyed:

a. Naval vessels

Submarines	5
M.T.B.s	8
Torpedoboats	1
Escort boats	1

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In 1943, 208 moored mines and 59 standard mines were swept.

V. Naval Gunnery Detachments and Naval Shore Detachments:

a. Naval Shore Commander, Caucasus:

At the end of the advance in the Caucasus, Naval Gunnery Detachment 613 reported 7 light and medium captured batteries ready for action. The 15.5 cm. Battery Breslau was especially successful in the fighting for Novorossisk.

During the retreat from the Kuban bridgehead, the naval shore detachments did excellent work both in gunnery and with the infantry in combatting landings and advancing enemy forces. In the final evacuation of the bridgehead the naval batteries repeatedly intervened in land battles. The units of Naval Shore Commander played a great part in the defense of Novorossisk. The light artillery employed in defense of the port sank the following vessels in the course of enemy landings in the harbor and inner bay:

- 1 motor gunboat
- 2 M.T.B.s
- 1 patrol boat
- 7 landing craft
- 2 rubber dinghies.

The units of Naval Gunnery Detachment 614 in and south of Kerch took part in the battle which finally liquidated the enemy forces who landed at Eltigen in November.

b. Naval Shore Commander, Ukraine:

Three light and 2 medium batteries from Naval Gunnery Detachment 614 were employed in the defense of the north coast of the Sea of Azov from Taganrog to Berdyansk. In the course of the withdrawal, the light artillery and anti-aircraft batteries repeatedly intervened in the land fighting and air battles with good results.

After the front had been withdrawn to Genichesk, the batteries were employed as Army artillery on Arabatzkaya Peninsula, in Chongar and on the Perekop Isthmus. They played an important part in the defense of the northern approaches to the Crimea and repulsed minor landing attempts on Arabatzkaya.

After the regrouping, Naval Gunnery Detachment 614 became a detachment of 150th Artillery Regiment in the Ishum-Armiansk area. Tasks: To reinforce the Army artillery in 50th Infantry Division,

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defend the Chuvash Peninsula and the ferry point east of Malaya Peninsula.

c. Naval Shore Commander, Crimea:

Nothing to report from the batteries of Naval Shore Commander, Crimea. It can be taken as certain, however, that the well-constructed coastal fortifications have prevented the enemy from attacking the Crimean coast west of Theodosia.

VI. Enemy Activity:

a. Surface Forces:

As far as is known, the nucleus of the Russian Fleet did not leave the bases of Poti and Batum during 1943. Destroyer and torpedoboat operations were restricted to some long-range sorties into the western Black Sea and as far as the Crimean coast, presumably with the object of intercepting our convoys. None of our ships was lost. On 6 October, 3 destroyers were sunk by dive-bombers after ineffectively shelling Yalta and Alushta. Two destroyers had previously been forced to withdraw in the face of torpedo attacks by our E-boats.

Apart from individual offensive operations, the destroyers and torpedoboats were occasionally employed as convoy escorts, especially for tankers between Batum and Tuapse.

Light Russian surface forces became very active in the Black Sea and in the Sea of Azov. They were the backbone of the landing operations. The enemy used these boats to escort convoys off the Caucasus coast and for anti-submarine operations near the shipping lanes and minefield operations off the Taman coast and in the southern part of Kerch Strait.

b. Submarines:

In the course of the year, enemy submarine activity steadily increased. Of the 30 submarines still available the enemy kept an average of six in the operational area or at sea between the base and the operational area. Enemy submarines concentrated off the Crimean coast, especially in Eupatoria Bay, the Constantza-Bugaz area and off the Bosphorus. The enemy is aware of the importance of the sea routes to the Crimea now that land communications have been cut and during the last 2 months has concentrated submarines in the Cape Tarkhankutski-Eupatoria area, that is, where shipping to Sevastopol converges.

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Motor gunboats	21
Submarine chasers	1
Q-ships	1
Guardboats	3
Landing craft	61
Total	<u>102</u>

b. Merchant ships

Freighters	8	totaling	13,000	G.R.T.
Tankers	5	"	27,000	G.R.T.
Coastal freighters	20	"	9,100	G.R.T.
Lighters	18	"	9,100	G.R.T.
Tugs	3			
Various small vessels	32			
Total	86	totaling	58,200	G.R.T.

2. Planes shot down:

a. By ships	52
b. By naval shore detachments	39
Total	<u>91</u>

3. Ships escorted:

2,030 vessels totaling 1,340,469 G.R.T.

4. Mines swept:

a. Moored mines	208
b. Standard mines	59
Total	<u>267</u>

5. Minefields laid:

50 minefields containing	4,776	mines
	1,119	explosive floats
Total	5,895	mines and floats

6. Ammunition used by ships and shore units:

a. Medium artillery	14,500	rounds
b. Light artillery	42,700	rounds
c. Medium anti-aircraft guns	19,500	rounds
d. Light anti-aircraft guns	320,000	rounds
Total	396,700	rounds

Own losses due to enemy action:

a. Naval vessels

E-boats	2
Motor minesweepers	2
Naval ferry barges	29
Harbor defense boats	10
Total	<u>43</u>

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b. Merchant vessels

Freighters	8	totaling 30,740 G.R.T.
Motor ships	1	" 500 G.R.T.
Lighters	14	" 9,610 G.R.T.
Tugs	5	
	27	totaling 40,850 G.R.T.

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